Economic and Social Conditions in France During the Eighteenth Century

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Economic and Social Conditions in France During the Eighteenth Century

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Introduction

If we would arrive at a true understanding of the nature of contemporary society, we must first get a picture of the economic and social life of France in former times, especially in the eighteenth century. Indeed, there is no more instructive method than the comparative, for it clearly reveals the similarities and, in particular, the contrasts.

Although only one hundred and fifty years—a brief period in the history of humanity—separate us from the era which we propose to study, it seems at first glance that the France of today bears very little resemblance to the France of Louis XVI. This is readily explained. In the intervening years the *ancien régime* was overthrown and the Revolution transformed all political and social institutions. Then, too, a profound economic revolution, in the nineteenth century, affecting France as well as all other countries, has altered the conditions of our material existence and our whole mode of life.

I

One fact which strikes us at the very outset is that the Revolution overturned all the old legal in-

stitutions. In eighteenth century France the social classes, as we conceive them today, can be detected only by an attentive observer of the realities of economic life. The superficial student sees merely the legal distinctions. Three estates can be discerned—the clergy, the nobility, and the third estate. Between them rise the barriers of secular privileges.

The privileges of the clergy and nobility constitute one of the characteristic features of eighteenth century society. Clergy and nobility exercised a preëminent right over all land property. The manorial dues of various kinds that they imposed upon the peasants who tilled the soil formed one of their chief sources of revenue. Clergy and nobility thus evaded most of the taxes and financial burdens that fell upon the popular classes and tended to increase their misery. Finally, most of the functions of the state were the prerogative of the privileged classes, especially of the nobility. Hence it is easy to understand why one of the great demands of the third estate in 1789 was precisely the participation of all classes in all duties and functions.

It is true that the ecclesiastical offices, in theory at least, seemed accessible to the commoners as well as the nobles; but in reality all the dignities of the high clergy, the episcopal sees, the abbeys, and the rich ecclesiastical benefits, were reserved to members of the nobility, especially the court nobility,

to an increasingly exclusive extent as we approach the Revolution.

The legal barriers separating the various classes became greater and greater as the *ancien régime* neared its end. We shall see later that the breach became ever wider between the nobles and the commoners. The nobility, although continuing to be recruited from the class of newly rich at least from the world of finance, tended to become a closed caste. The revision of the titles of nobility (*reformations de la noblesse*), achieved during the time of Louis XIV, did not, to be sure, consist primarily of fiscal measures, yet it cut off from the nobility families of recent extraction, especially those continuing to devote themselves to commerce, or noblemen too poor to assert their rights.

II

And yet the eighteenth century prepared the way for the profound transformations that were destined to characterize our own era and to change the aspect of the entire social world. Capitalism, in its commercial form at least, already loomed as a power and began to exert a great influence upon industry itself. The merchants, "controlling" rural industry more and more actively, opened the way for great capitalist industry. In the urban trades, at least in the textile trades, they often succeeded also in bringing under their economic dom-

ination the workmen who, formerly independent, now became salaried employees. The old labor organization no longer answered the new needs. At the close of the century, even after the failure of Turgot's reform, the trade guilds were doomed.

The introduction of machinery, at first restricted to a few industries, especially cotton-spinning, as well as industrial concentration, manifested in certain centers of the clothing industry and in the manufacture of prints, point also to the new era.

But this was only the beginning. On the whole, the old economic practises were still adhered to. In spite of progress in road building, the avenues of communication remained insufficient. The means of transportation had been changed, but not appreciably transformed, since the beginning of modern times. Maritime commerce had made great strides in the eighteenth century, and had greatly increased the national wealth; but navigation had scarcely changed since the seventeenth century. Tonnage remained small, and there was hardly a vessel of more than 400 or 500 tons.

Is it not significant that among the third estate of most of the cities, first place was occupied by lawyers, both advocates and attorneys, or by financiers, namely employees of the general farm or collectors of the royal taxes? Only in the larger ports did the merchants play an important rôle.

In short, for any one studying economic evolution, the great transformations did not come until

the following century. France under the new monarchy, until the approach of 1848, still preserved most of the characteristics of the *ancien régime*.

III

Finally one permanent trait of the economic and social history of France was strikingly revealed in the eighteenth century. This was the strengthening and perpetuation of the system of peasant ownership. It is well known that this ownership was gradually established during the Middle Ages under the guise of feudal tenure. The peasants, from the beginning of the Middle Ages, were completely freed from servitude in most parts of France and came to own the land they cultivated, with the right to will it to heirs, or to sell or exchange it. This property, however, was burdened with dues imposed by the manorial system, made particularly irksome because of the latter's practices and abuses. And yet there is reason to believe that the continuation of the manorial system up to the Revolution helped toward the consolidation of peasant ownership. This seems to us all the more plausible if we reflect that in England, where the manorial system was considerably weakened toward the end of the Middle Ages, peasant ownership was ultimately eliminated almost altogether in favor of the landed aristocracy.

However that may be, it will suffice for our pur-

poses to observe that the Revolution radically abolished the manorial system, making peasant ownership completely autonomous. Not that all the peasants became property owners, for many owned little or no land and constituted a veritable rural proletariat; but they comprised probably only a minority among the rural population. At any rate, the agrarian system of France has a profoundly original character, which distinguishes it from that of most of the other European countries. This is true to such an extent that even in our own day France has remained a type of rural democracy. In Western Europe it is the only great state in which the equilibrium is not disturbed in favor of industrial development. In this respect the present is closely related to the past.

The condition of land property, as it existed in the eighteenth century, also explains why in France the progress of agriculture was much slower than in countries where the landed aristocracy eliminated peasant ownership. France was also the country of land cultivation on a small scale. The proprietors, whether they belonged to the nobility or to the bourgeoisie, did not personally engage in cultivation. The peasants themselves cultivated all the land; but their resources were too small to permit them to take advantage of real agricultural improvements. They adhered to the old methods, and these tended toward the maintenance of the moors and meadows, the joint use of which was

regarded as absolutely necessary for the requirements of the peasant masses. The great clearings could not, in spite of some notable efforts, prove practicable. Uncultivated lands could be used only with partial success. In short, the new system of rural economy did not really triumph until the second half of the nineteenth century. Until about 1840 French agriculture still bore a close resemblance to that of the *ancien régime*.

We see, then, that the economic life of the eighteenth century was destined to extend beyond the Great Revolution. The latter effected above all the abolition of the legal prerogatives which separated the third estate from the privileged classes. This abolition gradually had an effect upon the economic development itself. It helped, though to a smaller degree than the progress of capitalism, to bring about a new division of the social classes, based upon the economic rôle that they played. On the other hand, the application of science to industry, which began in the eighteenth century, the triumph of steam, followed by that of electricity, and the revolution effected by the new means of transportation (railways and steamships) tended to overcome the ways and means of the *ancien régime* and to transform all the conditions of material life.

These are the reasons why the eighteenth century seems to us of today so remote. And yet it is in fact very close to us, if we consider that everything which touches contemporary life had its be-

ginnings in that period. Furthermore, in the history of France, especially from the economic and social point of view, there are permanent characteristics which give the country a very special aspect—characteristics no less important than the nature of the soil and the topography of the land. Thus we may explain a phenomenon which seems a paradox, namely, that in the country which several times has given the signal for revolution to a great part of Europe, the present is related perhaps more closely to the past than is the case in countries where a much more conservative attitude has prevailed.

IV

A few words are necessary to explain the plan which we have followed and which might, at first glance, surprise the reader.

Usually, in dealing with the history of French society, a classification based upon legal considerations is adopted. Distinction is made between the three estates, the clergy and nobility, as the privileged classes, and the common people, classed under the single head of "the third estate."

This classification has the grave defect of not being based upon economic life, which is the determining factor in the condition of the social classes. Let us take, for example, the third estate. It comprises various classes, in reality quite dis-

tinct, namely, the high bourgeoisie (lawyers, office-holders, and financiers), merchants and tradesmen, artisans and laborers, and finally the peasants.

Although we find the legal distinctions still exerting a great influence upon the social state in the eighteenth century, it seems more rational for us to base our classification upon the various forms of property, and to distinguish essentially between the classes that directly or indirectly live from land property, from rural economy, and those that derive their subsistence from urban economy, from personal property, from commercial and industrial activity. And since economic phenomena and social facts influence one another not a little, we shall always keep the two types of problems, in reality inseparable, before us with that in mind.

In dealing with a subject which learned research has just barely begun to consider, and in which generalizations, still seem rather premature, the writer should be able to give references for each step. But the nature of this work precluded such a practise. In each chapter, however, there have been indicated the essential works which will make it possible for the reader gradually to familiarize himself with the questions of which only a superficial survey could here be given.

Chapter I

Land Property; its Distribution. The Population of France

First we shall describe the classes that live from real property, that is, land, either by deriving their resources from agricultural labor (the peasants), or by living from the exploitation of the peasants, in other words, from the revenues which the peasants are obliged to furnish those who are the eminent proprietors of the soil, namely, the clergy and the nobility.

The first step, then, is to get an idea of the apportionment of property among these three social classes. Doubtless we cannot secure precise statistics. We can only, by virtue of tax-lists and especially the rolls of twentieths (vingtièmes), which Loutchisky has used, and also by virtue of the numerous land-records of the eighteenth century, make computations that are, to be sure, merely approximate, yet throw light upon the facts and are in accord with actual realities.

The figures that we shall quote have no absolute value. They can be criticised severely and may be modified by further investigations. On the other hand, since they are based upon voluminous ab-

stracts of tax-lists, the details of which Loutchisky was not always able to give, it seems legitimate to use them. On the whole we believe they have a real value, in spite of the criticisms directed against them.

THE PROPERTY OF THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES

It appears that the nobility possessed an important part of the land, but a much smaller amount than was usually believed. In his work "Etat des classes agricoles à la veille de la Révolution" (Condition of the Agricultural Classes on the Eve of the Revolution) Loutchisky arrives at the following conclusions: in Artois the nobility had 29 per cent of the land; in Picardy 33 per cent; in Burgundy 35 per cent; in Limousin 15 per cent; in Upper Auvergne 11 per cent; in Quercy 15 per cent; in Dauphiné 12 per cent; in Landes 22 per cent; in Béarn 20 per cent; in the section of Toulouse 28 per cent; in Roussillon 32 per cent; in Orléanais about 40 per cent. In Upper Brittany and Normandy and generally in western France the holdings of the nobility seem to have been much more extensive than in the other regions.

Contrary to what was long believed, the clergy owned infinitely less land than the nobility. Northern France is an exception in this respect. Thus in Hainault and Cambrésis the clergy held 40 per cent of the property, and in Artois the

ecclesiastical holdings comprised one-fifth or one-fourth of the land, while in Laonnois these holdings amounted to 29 per cent and in Picardy to 18 per cent. But the farther west or south we go, the smaller the proportion grows, as the following table reveals:

	Per cent
Burgundy	11 and 15
Berry	15
Touraine	10
Auvergne	3.5
Lower Limousin and Quercy	2
Section of Toulouse	4
Roussillon	2.5
Béarn	1.5
Landes	1
Section of Rennes	3.4

As for the total, we may agree with G. Lecarpentier, who ascribes to the clergy an average of only 6 per cent of the land of France. The wealth of the clergy, as we shall see, was due in great part to its urban holdings and the collection of tithes.

It should also be noted that a large proportion of the property of the nobility and the clergy consisted of small forests and woods, and that these holdings were usually divided into small parcels—a fact which made agricultural exploitation on a large scale, in accordance with the English practise,

impossible. It is well to note that when we speak of the property of the nobility and the clergy, we mean only the immediate land of the manors (the so-called *domaine proche*) which was usually rented to farmers, or *métayers*, farming on half profits. But the lords exercised also a right of eminent ownership over the lands dependent upon their fiefs and especially upon the peasant tenures, for very few of the latter were allodial, that is, completely autonomous.

PEASANT PROPERTY

It is nevertheless true that the peasant tenures should be regarded as real hereditary property, since they were willed to heirs or could be transferred. They were merely encumbered by dues and taxes collected by the lord. Hence the peasants possessed a considerable part of the land, the proportion of which, however, varies in the different sections. In the western provinces it seems smallest. Thus in Normandy, Brittany, and Poitou we estimate it at only about one-fifth. In the north, in Picardy, in Artois, and in the region that later formed the Département du Nord (Flanders, Hainault and Cambrésis), as well as in Orléanais and Burgundy, it amounts to about one-third. In Languedoc and Limousin it is one-half, and in Dauphiné it is two-fifths. In the second half of the eighteenth century, peasant property, far from

decreasing, seems to have undergone a notable increase in certain regions. Loutchisky finds this true generally of Soissons, where the peasants acquired four times as much land as they sold, as well as of Limousin, where from 1779 to 1791 they acquired an additional four thousand acres. Nevertheless Lefebvre thinks he can prove that peasant holdings in the north hardly increased after 1770; only the number of owners grew during the eighteenth century, no doubt as the result of inheritance. However that may be, since the peasants constituted 90 per cent of the owners, their holdings were often very small. The small size of the peasant holdings is an undeniable fact and one of great importance.

Many peasants possessed only infinitesimal parcels of land, particularly in northern France. Lefebvre proves that in Cambrésis from 60 to 70 per cent of the owners held less than a hectare, and 20 per cent less than five hectares. But since at least five hectares are necessary to support a family, most of the peasants had to find work as farmers or as agricultural laborers. In Flanders, Cambrésis, and Hainault, as well as in Artois, Picardy, and Normandy, and to a certain extent in Brittany, there was a veritable rural proletariat which was reduced to misery by lack of work or poverty, and that explains the great number of beggars and vagabonds. Owners of means and farmers on a large scale (often called *laboureurs*) constituted only a small

minority of the rural population. It was especially this class that, at the time of the Revolution, profited by the abolition of the manorial system and the sale of the national property.

The bourgeoisie, too, owned a considerable portion of the real property, especially near the towns and larger cities, where there was a greater field for activity. In the north, for example, from 16 to 17 per cent of the land was owned by the bourgeoisie.

This distribution of the real property which we have outlined gives France of the eighteenth century a quite peculiar aspect. It distinguishes the country notably from England, where the great holdings of the nobility gradually did away with small peasant holdings, because of the enclosures. It distinguishes France also from the greater part of central Europe, and particularly from eastern Europe, where the large holdings of the nobility continually extended and grew stronger in the course of modern times. This phenomenon has given to French society an original character and has exercised a notable influence upon its entire historical development.

The agrarian development of England since the end of the Middle Ages shows us the reasons why peasant ownership was preserved and strengthened in France. In Great Britain the progress of the wool industry inspired the lords to transform cultivated lands into pasturages and to increase their

immediate domain by means of enclosures. And at the same time the greater precariousness of the tenures, which had made itself felt since the Middle Ages, as well as the weakening of the manorial system, facilitated this transformation. The British lords were not interested in maintaining the peasant tenures, which netted them only small revenues. Finally the aristocracy, which had seized the political power as a result of the revolutions during the seventeenth century, was free to take possession of all the land. In France it was quite different. Commercial and industrial capitalism was slower to develop and less intense. The lords were increasingly submitted to the authority of the crown, which opposed excessive encroachments. Furthermore, since they enjoyed extensive manorial rights that were often lucrative, the nobles did not care to destroy the system of peasant tenures depending upon their fiefs. Thus small peasant ownership perhaps owes its continued existence and its progress to the maintenance of the manorial system. And then, when the Revolution destroyed this system, peasant ownership finally became fully autonomous.

THE POPULATION OF FRANCE

Another element to be considered in studying the economic and social life of any period is the population. It is very important to know its size

and density, as well as the proportional relation of the urban to the rural population. Unfortunately, so far as the eighteenth century is concerned, we possess only insufficient data and estimates of no scientific value. Here or there a document gives us the number of households (feux), but it is hard to determine whether the word *feu* here designates an actual household or a fiscal unit. The figures given in the reports of the governors of the provinces about 1700 are merely approximate. Only after 1770 did the government call for marriage, birth, and death statistics, according to the parish registers. Turgot even proposed the compilation of real statistics on population.

According to these "movements of population," Necker in his "Administration des finances" (Administration of Finances) of 1784 estimated the population of France at twenty-four millions, while Calonne in his "L'état de la population du royaume" (Status of the Population of the Kingdom), presented to the Assembly of Notables in 1787, placed it at twenty-three millions. According to these documents, the total population of the cities hardly exceeded two millions, and the provinces possessed only a single city in excess of 100,000 inhabitants, namely Lyons (135,000). The great ports, such as Marseilles, Bordeaux, Nantes, and Rouen, were among the most populous. But most of the urban centers had less than 20,000 inhabitants. Capitals such as Dijon and Grenoble

would, with their 21,000 and 23,000 inhabitants, respectively, be considered very small cities today. Finally the movement of population shows that the population increased perceptibly at the end of the *ancien régime,* except in Brittany. Another interesting fact is the high birth rate, counterbalanced, however, by a high general mortality which can be explained by frequent epidemics and also by an enormous infant mortality. At all events, in 1789 France was one of the most densely populated countries of Europe, much more so than England or Germany. This explains in part the rôle that it played during the period.

When we consider the elements of the population we find that it was very stable. Emigration hardly existed. It is true that the revocation of the Edict of Nantes at the end of the seventeenth century exiled about 100,000 Protestants, almost all inhabitants of the cities and belonging to the industrial and commercial classes; for the Huguenot peasants, converted only in name, hardly left the kingdom. But in the eighteenth century, with the exception of a few hundred families from Perche and Maine who colonized Canada, there was no emigration, properly speaking. Nor did immigration contribute much to the increase of population. It consisted of a slight influx of Irish fugitives from English persecution, and some Dutch and Hanseatic merchants. Nevertheless it had a certain economic importance, as for example

at Nantes and Bordeaux, where many merchant families came from foreign countries. At Marseilles, too, Greek and Armenian families served to swell the ranks of the commercial class.

THE INFINITE VARIETY OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

We must mention also another phenomenon which considerably influenced the economic and social life of the *ancien régime*. It is the infinite variety of weights and measures, which we hardly need emphasize because the Revolution, by establishing the metric system, introduced admirable simplicity and order in place of chaos.

Surface measures were relatively simple. This does not mean, however, that they were not quite varied and different in various regions. The documents of the period mention particularly the *arpent* and the *journal*. The *arpent* was regularly divided into one hundred *perches*, but the length of the *perche* varied greatly—the *arpent* at Paris being equivalent to 34 *ares*, at Poitou to 42, at Eaux and Forêts to 51. The *journal*, used in Brittany, was equivalent to about 48 *ares*. The *boisselée* (based on the volume of a *boisseau*, that is, a peck and a half) varied in one and the same section to such an extent that it could be quivalent either to 15 *ares*, 10 *ares*, or even 7 *ares*.

Measures of volume varied still more. The capacity of the *boisseau*, for example, fluctuated in

the single province of Poitou between 65 and 10 liters. Each manor, high or average, had the right "of weights, measures and of stamping." In order to increase its income each one was interested in increasing the size of its measures. A letter inserted in the "Affiches du Poitou" in 1775 declares:

"I forgot to call your attention to the fact that the *boisseau* of Civray should weigh only about forty pounds, that it had only this weight in 1709, and that it has gradually increased about three or four pounds. At Aulnay, Chiré, Beauvoir, etc., similar increases have taken place."

We shall see later to how much abuse this uncertainty in regard to weights and measures led. The multiples of the *boisseau* (*setier, muid, minot, charge,* etc.) had the same fluctuations. The *litre,* the *pinte,* the *barrique* and the *velte* were no more constant. For measuring cloth the ell (*aune*) was used, and it, too, varied in different sections and was extensively abused. Finally there was nothing more unstable than the weights used before the Revolution. In no two places did the pound, the ounce, etc., have exactly the same value. It is easy to see how such a system necessarily embarrassed all transactions, and it is clear why the writers of the eighteenth century, and the official reports of the States General of 1789, demanded the standardization of the weights and measures with quite as much insistence as they demanded the standardization of customs. The French Revolution was des-

tined to satisfy this twofold demand and to establish a system so rational that it has since served as a model for all civilized countries.

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Chapter II

The Peasants and Agriculture

Before we consider the classes that live from real property it would seem logical to devote our attention to agriculture. But at the time under consideration the legal condition of these classes was one of the essential factors for the productiveness of the soil. The slight progress of agriculture under the *ancien régime* is explained in great part by the condition of the peasants, the only class engaged in exploiting the soil. Hence we shall begin by describing the legal condition of the rural population. This will make clearer the reasons why before the Revolution no great change took place in agriculture.

The French peasants, during the two last centuries of the *ancien régime,* seem to have been more favored than their congeners in the rest of Europe, for to a large extent they were personally free and owned their land.

THE MORTGAGORS

Servitude still existed but was retained only in certain regions where it had been most frequent during the Middle Ages, especially in the north-

east (Franche-Comté and Lorraine), and also in less compact groups in some sections of the central region (Berry, Nivernais, Marche and Auvergne). The total number of serfs, it seems, did not exceed one million.

Moreover, they were not so much serfs, in the sense of the Middle Ages, as they were *mainmortables* (mortgagors). We distinguish between a personal mortmain and a real mortmain, predominant in eastern France. In the former case the children, if they do not live with their parents, can not inherit any of their property. In the latter case the peasant is subject to the mortmain only for the mortgageable goods that he holds.

It is true that mortmain was preserved until the Revolution, in spite of the energetic campaign which Voltaire undertook in favor of the serfs of Mont-Jura.

In 1779 Necker abolished mortmain on the royal estates, and in the entire kingdom the *right of suite*. But the lords did not imitate the example set by the government. Mortmain continued until the Revolution, but only as an exception, the immense majority of peasants being personally free.

THE VARIOUS CLASSES. FARMERS AND "MÉTAYERS"

The peasants, although they enjoyed complete liberty, did not, however, form a single class, for

they did not all possess the same amount of property. There were some who could live exclusively from the cultivation of their fields, and who constituted a sort of peasant aristocracy, the class of laborers. They were the ones who increased their holdings, profited by clearings, and during the Revolution took advantage of the sale of the national property. But most of the peasants did not own enough land to permit them to live thereby. If they had some capital they became farmers or *métayers* (co-operative farmers). The poorest hired themselves out as day-laborers or servants. Many of the proprietor peasants conducted a gainful trade on the side, being merchants, millers, innkeepers or artisans (masons, carpenters, tailors, weavers). Thus the extension of rural industry is explained. The agricultural laboring class, the day-laborers, never had the importance in France that it had in England.

Exploitation on a large scale did not exist in France. The nobles themselves did not cultivate the lands of their immediate domain, nor did they lease them to capitalist contractors, or to farmers, as in England.

It was the peasants who as tenant farmers or *métayers* tilled the great majority of lands belonging to the privileged classes. The size of the parcels of land actually cultivated varied infinitely in extent. Some were as large as ten or twenty hectares; but others again were mere small gar-

dens, containing only small strips of land. Some of the farmers were in easy circumstances, while others were paupers. In general the parcels actually cultivated were quite small, and the distribution of the farms corresponded to the distribution of the land.

Leasing on the basis of an equal division of the crops, or coöperative farming (*métayage*), quite rare today, seems to have been the general practise in the eighteenth century, especially in the poorer provinces, where the peasants had neither capital nor stock. This was predominantly the case in the central and southern portions. It is true of about half of the lands rented out in Brittany and Lorraine. The farmer had to give to the owner, who advanced him seed and stock, half of the crop, sometimes even more, depending upon the form of lease, as for example that used in Upper Brittany, where money-rent was added to rent in kind (*bail à détroit*). Hence the métayer was often in a pitiable condition, as Arthur Young testifies in his "Travels in France":

> "Since the tenants have hardly anything to offer but the strength of their arms, they are more at the mercy of the proprietor than if they possessed some means; they would not be content, in their contracts, with a profit less than the interest on their capital."

Mr. Young explains also that many of the cooperative farmers were in such miserable circum-

stances that they were forced to borrow their subsistence from the proprietor until the next crop was harvested.

The condition of the ordinary tenant farmers seems to have been somewhat better. Their lease, made for three, six or nine years, stipulated the payment of a fixed sum of money, to which were added, however, payments in kind and various forms of compulsory labor. The system of renting was predominant in northern France, where agricultural exploitations were more considerable than elsewhere. This was the case in Artois, Picardy, Vexin, and Beauce. During the second half of the eighteenth century farms were operated in chains. These chains, very advantageous for the proprietors, whose income they increased, unfortunately put many of the less prosperous farmers out of work and increased the antagonism between the rich cultivators and the poor. The memorials of 1789—the so-called cahiers—show this clearly. A circumstance that also contributed to the misfortune of the farmers was the very rapid rise in the prices of farms, especially in the second half of the century. It is true that during the same period the price of commodities also increased. But this was only an insufficient offset, for while food prices rose from 40 to 50 per cent, the price of farms often increased 100 per cent. In this way the proprietors succeeded in adding considerably to their income.

We should note also certain systems of renting prevalent in various regions, such as the terminable domain in Lower Brittany. According to this system the domanial farmer was at the same time proprietor and tenant-farmer. While the lord owned the land, the tenant owned the buildings and whatever was above the ground. But he was at the mercy of the lord, who could terminate the agreement unless he had assured the tenant of a definite tenure, generally fixed at nine years. For this assurance, called *baillée,* the tenant was often compelled to pay an excessive commission. Furthermore the tenant had to pay not only the stipulated rent, but also the domanial dues of various kinds. In the vineyards near Nantes we find the system of renting known as co-planting (*complant*). The co-planter was the owner, not of the land, but of the vine-plants. As soon as the plant disappeared, the tenure reverted to the proprietor. We should mention also the system current in Picardy, known as the right of market (*droit de marché*), whereby the farmers looked upon themselves as perpetual lessees. In Languedoc and Dauphiné, again, there were the perpetual leases (*locatairies perpétuelles*), which assured a sort of perpetual usufruct to the tenant.

THE DAY-LABORERS AND SERVANTS

The peasants who were too destitute were forced to take employment as agricultural laborers or day-

laborers. No doubt this class was much less numerous in France than in England. Nevertheless it formed an important part of the agricultural population, especially in sections such as Flanders, Picardy, eastern Normandy and Brittany. We have shown elsewhere that in certain parishes of Brittany the majority were day-laborers.

The wages of the day-laborers naturally varied according to locality. They do not seem to have exceeded 7 or 8 sous for men and 5 or 6 sous for women. At the end of the *ancien régime* they seem to have increased a little, but the increase was, as usual in such cases, not commensurate with the increased cost of living. Hence the day-laborers were most affected by crises, such as hard times, epidemics, etc., and they contributed the greatest number of beggars and vagabonds, of whom there were very many up to the time of the Revolution.

The servants, employed especially on the larger farms, enjoyed a less precarious existence than the day-laborers, since they were hired by the year and received lodging and board. Their wages increased perceptibly during the eighteenth century. The "Souvenirs d'un nonagénaire" (Recollections of a Nonagenarian) indicate, for the end of the *ancien régime,* the following figures for annual wages, which do not seem exceptional:

Foreman	84 to 90 livres.
Carter	54 to 66 "

Ox-driver	30 to 36	livres.
Stable-boy	60 to 66	"
Female servant	24 to 33	"

And in addition, the last-mentioned received one or two pairs of wooden shoes and one or two ells of cloth.

The food of the servants consisted especially of bread, butter, and cakes. Sometimes they received also bacon; other meat they got but rarely. Their ordinary beverage was water, except in the wine-growing regions, where they were provided with sour wine made from grapes or apples.

THE MANORIAL SYSTEM (*régime seigneurial*)

The condition of the peasants cannot be understood without a knowledge of the nature of the manorial system. As a tenant of the manor, the peasant was subject to all the dues of the manorial system. In the first place, he was obliged to pay for admission to his status (*aveu*) upon the occasion of a transfer, not to mention the general *aveu* to which vassals were bound every ten, twenty or thirty years. As for the dues, they were certainly less burdensome than they had been during the Middle Ages. The personal dues were almost all transformed into real dues, being charged only against the tenures. The so-called *taille* had disappeared almost completely. Compulsory labor

had usually given way to money dues, or represented only a few days' labor throughout the year.

The dues that were maintained most successfully were those charged against the land and collected in money or kind (rent or quit-rent). Since for several centuries they had remained remarkably constant, the money-rents were, as a result of the diminution of the value of money, slightly reduced. The rents in kind, and notably champerty, were the only heavy dues. Dues of succession (the *rachat* or *acapte*) or of transfer (*lods* and *ventes*) weighed rather heavily upon the tenants of the lowest class. The *socomes* of the millers, bakers, and wine-pressers (*banalités*) constituted a heavy and pressing obligation. The tolls, and the dues of the market and the fair, embarrassed commercial transactions and hindered the sale of agricultural commodities. The hunting right seems to have been the most odious of all the manorial monopolies, for the hounds of the nobles and the game of the vivaries ravaged the cultivated fields. This was a source of universal complaint in France. Finally, manorial justice, which permitted the lord to be judge and party in suits relative to rights that he exercised over his tenants, was the indispensable instrument of exploitation on the part of the lords. Nowhere did this appear more clearly than in Brittany, where "fief" and justice were confused. In both civil and criminal suits there is general complaint over the evils of the manorial courts, and

also of the great number of jurisdictions superimposed upon one another.

To the dues of the manorial system there must be added the tithes, which often enough had become the property of a lay lord (enfeoffed tithes). They consumed an important part of the crop (a tenth or a thirteenth), and applied not only to grain (great tithes), but also to flax, hemp, beans and fruits (small tithes). Often they deprived the peasants of a larger part of his revenue than all the manorial rents. In Bordelais, for example, the tithes amounted to 14 per cent, while the manorial rents represented only 11 per cent. We should note also that the lords complained almost as bitterly of the ecclesiastical tithes as the peasants. Hence it is easy to explain their abolition at the beginning of the Revolution.

It is worthy of note that the manorial system did not have the same intensity in all parts of France. Very rigorous in Brittany, rather harsh in Lorraine, oppressive in Auvergne and in the section of Autun, as well as in Bordeaux, it seems to have been less onerous in Maine, Normandy, and Champagne. Around Orléans, in Angoumois, and in Flanders along the coast it was even less burdensome.

EXTENT OF THE SYSTEM AND AGGRAVATION OF MANORIAL EXPLOITATION

To understand the extent of the manorial system, we must take into account not only the dues them-

selves, but also the abuses and vexations to which they led. Thus the *socomes* were so unbearable only on account of the exactions of the millers, who demanded more than the usual fee and cheated with regard to the weight of wheat. For the payment of the *aveux* unreasonable sums were collected, and often they were re-collected on the pretext that the declarations were erroneous. This was called *impunissement*. Beside the base services, there were demanded, especially in Brittany, extraordinary services that had developed in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As for rents, the manner in which they were collected increased their burdensomeness. The "solidarity of rents" obliged the tenants to pay the quota for the insolvents. Fines were demanded for every delay in payment. Sometimes the rents were allowed to be in arrears for fifteen or twenty years, and then a lump payment was demanded, a thing that embarrassed the peasants greatly. The collection of rents in kind led to even greater abuses. If there was delay in their delivery, they were demanded in money, according to valuation, at the market price. But often the valuation was made in an arbitrary manner, in such a way that the market price was fixed at a time when grain was at its peak. The tenants were also cheated in the measurement of grain, for the measures varied extremely in different localities.

It would seem that the manorial dues were made

heavier at the end of the *ancien régime,* and that there came about what is known as the "feudal reaction." This reaction is not manifested in the creation of new obligations, but in the arbitrary increase of the old ones, or in the revival of those that had fallen into disuse. In the second half of the eighteenth century there was a revival of the court-rolls (*terriers*), burdensome for the vassals, who complained of the vexatious activity and exactions of the terrier commissioners.

The reasons for the reaction against the manorial system are easily explained if we consider that the lords, being ever more in need of raising money, endeavored to get as much as they could from their manorial rights, as well as from their farm-rents. In fact, the manorial accounts show that the revenues of the privileged owners increased notably during the last twenty years of the *ancien régime.*

This also explains why the lords tried to derive benefit from those parts of their property which until then had remained unproductive, and came into conflict with the rights of usufruct enjoyed by the peasants, trying to deprive them of the collective enjoyment of the wood-lands, waste-lands, and barren stretches which the peasants needed for wood-cutting, for fertilizing their lands, and for pasturing their cattle. In order to restrict the uses of the inhabitants, the lords had a legal recourse. They concluded with them the so-called contracts of cantonment or of choice (*triage*), which re-

served two-thirds or one-third of the waste-lands. These contracts became more numerous after 1750. But often they resorted also to brutal usurpation, using even fraudulent means. The lands thus freed from use were leased for quit-rent by the lords, on condition that toll or dues be paid. Such subinfeudations were advantageous for the bourgeoisie and peasants in better circumstances, but they were very disadvantageous for the poor, who could not do without the use of these lands. Often the two classes were thereby brought into conflict in the fields, or divided into two hostile camps. Such methods on the part of the lords were noted everywhere, but particularly in provinces where the manorial system remained strong, as in Brittany; in the wooded regions, such as Lorraine; and also in the mountains, as in Haute-Auvergne and Dauphiné, where the commoners predominated. All these abuses and acts of usurpation were, moreover, favored by the parliaments, whose members frequently possessed important rural lands (especially in Brittany and Dauphiné) and took advantage of their authority to impose unjust burdens upon their vassals.

Hence we find at the end of the *ancien régime* an aggravation of manorial exploitation, more marked in some places than in others. Although the abuses involved mainly the reëstablishment of old rights that had fallen into disuse, and the exaggeration of abusive practises, the peasants were

convinced that they were being made the victims of hateful innovations, and that never before had they been so cruelly exploited. It is thus that we may explain the vehement claims that they made in the parish memorials of 1789, as also in the petitions addressed to the feudal committee of the Constituent Assembly. It is thus, too, that we may explain the agrarian troubles which after July 14 accompanied the Great Fear, and which appeared with even greater intensity in 1790 and 1791, until the Convention took the radical step of abolishing the whole manorial system.

THE TAXES LEVIED BY THE ROYAL TREASURY

The taxes levied by the royal treasury were very instrumental in aggravating the condition of the peasants. It was the peasants alone who paid the *taille*, and even the new imposts (capitation and twentieth-tax) that were aimed at the nobles, fell almost entirely upon the rural population. We must also take into account the very defective, unjust system of assessment of the taxes, as well as the evils of the manner of collecting them. The notables of the parishes, who had to collect them, were obliged to pay the quota of those who defaulted.

It would be interesting to determine the portion of the income deducted by taxation. But there are no exact statistics available on this question.

In Bordelais, according to Marion, the taxes took 36 per cent of the income; in Limousin, where a rate was fixed for the *taille*, the taxes absorbed one-third of the income on good lands and four-fifths on mediocre land. In Saintonge the taxes totaled one-fourth of the price of the farm.

The franc-fief constituted also a heavy burden on the lands owned by the nobles and occupied by commoners, for it deprived the latter of a year's revenue every twenty years and also upon the occasion of each succession. Nor should we forget the new road-labor duties dating from the eighteenth century, carried out in a very oppressive manner and with unjust distribution, since these duties affected only the peasants, although they used the roads very little. Then there was also billeting and carting for the army. Finally there was the militia, in itself not a heavy service, but weighing only upon the peasants, and, by virtue of its system of exemptions, mainly upon those in poor circumstances.

All the writers of the time were struck by the overwhelming burden which the taxes imposed upon the peasants. Jean Jacques Rousseau, in his "Confessions," relates that one day he requested the hospitality of a peasant, who at first served him only the coarsest of foods; but little by little the peasant allowed himself to be coaxed, and finally brought out wine, white bread, and delicious ham.

"He gave me to understand that he hid his wine because of his hired help, and that he hid his bread because of the *taille.* He said he would be lost if people thought otherwise than that he was dying of hunger. Here (adds Rousseau) was the germ of that undying hatred which since then has developed in my heart against the torments of the unfortunate people and against their oppressors."

AGRICULTURAL EXPLOITATION

Few large parcels, a predominance of exploitation on a small scale, and cultivation in the hands of the poor peasants—these are some of the conditions that militate against the progress of agriculture. In fact, French agriculture was at this time quite backward, especially if we compare it with English agriculture.

One characteristic feature was the great quantity of uncultivated lands and waste-lands, especially in Brittany, where they comprised two-fifths of the area, and in the mountainous regions, such as Roussillon, the Central Chain (*Massif Central*) and the Alpine regions. To be sure, the proportion was much smaller in the Îsle de France, in Picardy, Flanders and Alsace. The uncultivated lands play an important part in the rural economy of the period. Many peasants without pasturage sent their cattle to graze on the common waste-lands and used the produce of these lands as litter for their animals, and especially as fertilizer for their fields.

The methods of cultivation remained very primitive, and progress was very slow, except in the richest and most fertile regions. The farm-buildings were poorly arranged, and the implements were unsatisfactory and quite primitive, being hardly superior to those employed during the Middle Ages. Intensive cultivation was practically unknown almost everywhere. The system of fallow land was used universally, except in Flanders, Alsace, and a part of Normandy. Even in Picardy the land lay idle one year in three. In Brittany it was left idle every other year, sometimes for two years out of three, and certain "cold" lands were cultivated only every seven or eight years, or even every twenty years. The artificial meadow was hardly ever used.

The peasants, prompted by the spirit of routine and having but little capital, devoted no great care to cultivation. They did not plow deeply, they weeded their grain negligently, sowed too late, and used poor seed. Almost everywhere there was lack of good manure. Since the farm itself furnished very little manure, leaves and ferns, allowed to rot, were used instead. This explains the small crops. In Brittany they hardly exceeded 5 or 6 to 1; in Limousin 3 or 4, while in Flanders they rose exceptionally to 11.

Another characteristic feature was that in almost all France wheat was considered a luxury crop and rye predominated, except in Toulouse, Angoumois,

and the coastal region of Brittany. Poor land was used particularly for buckwheat, and this furnished the peasants their principal nourishment in the form of cakes. In the central and southern sections maize played an important part. Flax and hemp were more extensively cultivated than is the case today, because of the extent of rural and domestic industry. The government, fearing that wines might take the place of grains, restricted the cultivation of the former in the eighteenth century. But it flourished and was remunerative in the south and particularly in Lower Languedoc. Forest exploitation, ruined by a poor system of management and by abuses on the part of the commoners, left much to be desired, and the development of the iron-works, mines and foundries increased deforestation, which became more and more serious. Cattle-raising and horse-breeding remained very mediocre, although the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a certain amount of improvement.

Carelessness on the part of the great proprietors, the indolence of the peasants, who were discouraged by the overwhelming taxes, insufficiency of the ways of communication and particularly of the main highways, in addition to obstacles placed in the path of the trade in agricultural commodities and in the path of free cultivation—all these things explain the slow development of agriculture.

During the second half of the eighteenth century efforts were, indeed, made to improve agricultural conditions, but the initiative was taken almost exclusively by the government.

Under the influence of the economists, and particularly the physiocrats, agriculture became one of the most important considerations of the royal administration. Memorials and instructions were continually sent to the governors of the provinces recommending improved methods in agriculture. The first agricultural committee was created in 1761, and Bertin, who from 1761 to 1783 seems to have been a veritable minister of economic affairs, initiated a whole series of measures for increasing the productiveness of the soil. Toward the end of the *ancien régime,* as a result of the drought of 1785, a committee for the administration of agriculture was created, having among its members some very distinguished scholars, agriculturists and economists, such as Lavoisier, the botanist du Tillet, the economist Dupont de Nemours, the inspector of factories Lazowski, and Duke de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt. These men made interesting investigations and drew up very instructive reports, but their activities extended over only two years, from 1785 to 1787.

Since 1761 Bertin had endeavored to establish in each generality an agricultural society. The estates of Brittany had founded one as early as 1757. These societies made interesting investigations, and

their members drew up reports and even conducted experiments. But their efforts, which extended over only a few years, do not seem to have had a great effect upon the progress of agriculture. The great majority of the planters remained faithful to the traditional practises, especially on account of lack of capital. Only in the rich sections of the northwest was appreciable progress noted. Artificial meadows were developed there and new crops introduced.

It is true that in the kingdom as a whole the amount of productive lands increased. The royal declarations of 1764 and 1766 encouraged, by exemption from taxation, the draining of the marshes and the clearing of the uncultivated lands. Indeed important sections were drained in Picardy, Normandy, Brittany and Vendée. Many uncultivated lands were cleared in all sections. However, on the eve of the Revolution the main part of the work still remained to be done. For the mass of the population, needing the waste-lands for its own uses, was opposed to draining and clearing, and for the same reason there was opposition to the division of the common property. In fact, such division was not very usual before the Revolution, as shown by the documents published by Georges Bourgin.

Division of the commons, draining and clearing seemed advantageous only to the great proprietors and such farmers as were in easy circumstances.

They alone reacted favorably to the efforts of the government, undertaken during the last twenty years of the *ancien régime,* to restrict common pasture and the right of commonage, practises that were quite injurious to agriculture. It was found necessary to resort to partial measures, applicable only to regions in which reform seemed most urgent. Even these measures were not entirely effective.

There was a genuine need for a complete redistribution of lands, analogous to the system of enclosures which at that time was practised in England. But this was out of the question in France.

RURAL INDUSTRY

An indication of the insufficiency of agricultural production is the extension of rural industry in the seventeenth, and especially the eighteenth, century. This furnished an important addition to the means of subsistence of the peasant. We find it to be the case particularly in Brittany and Lower Maine. In Brittany the cloth industry was exclusively rural and domestic. Those engaged in it were the small proprietors, farmers (who often employed their servants), and day-laborers, who manufactured cloth when they had no work. The wages of the weavers were very small and the profits went largely to the manufacturers, that is,

the merchants, who took up the finished product and often advanced the raw materials.

In regions where agriculture was more prosperous, as in western Normandy, Picardy, and Flanders, the peasants engaged in rural industry were those who possessed too little land to live from agriculture. In eastern Normandy the Parliament of Rouen, in 1722, speaks of peasants abandoning the cultivation of the soil in order to spin and card cotton, and it complains of the injurious result for agriculture. There was no Norman village without its spinners and weavers. Some 180,000 persons were thus employed by the industry at Rouen.

Picardy presented a quite similar picture.

In those provinces in which industry to some extent turned the cities toward the rural sections, the rural artisan was more closely bound to the class of merchants who took up his products and furnished him not only with the raw material, but even with the loom. In this case rural industry appears indeed to have been the first stage of development leading to the triumph of the great capitalist industry. In the rural sections of Upper Normandy and near Troyes the looms of the cotton trade did great damage to the workmen in the cities, who complained to the manufacturers that they were being reduced to misery. Because of mechanical improvements the weaver's trade was within reach

of rather unskilled artisans without professional training and commanding very low wages, a fact which inspired the merchants all the more to avail themselves of their labor.

MODE OF LIFE AMONG THE PEASANTS

The material existence of the peasants was still quite miserable, even at the end of the *ancien régime*. Their dwelling-places were altogether inadequate. Most of them were built of mud, covered with thatch, and having only a single low room without a ceiling. The windows were small and had no glass. In Brittany, and especially in Lower Brittany, it has been said that the peasants lived "in the water and in the mud." This is one of the principal causes for the epidemics that were still so frequent. However, as today, living conditions varied in different regions. In northern France the peasants seemed to have the most comfortable homes.

Furthermore, we must never fail to distinguish between the peasants in comfortable circumstances and the poor ones, particularly when we consider furniture and clothing. The former had furnishings that were simple, primitive and suitable, sufficient dishes and linen, as well as enough clothing. The poor, on the other hand, could hardly satisfy their most elementary requirements. Among the well-to-do the inventory after death—our prin-

cipal source of information—sometimes estimates the furnishings at over one thousand francs; among the poor they are frequently worth no more than 50 or even 20 livres. The poor dispose of only one or two trunks, a table, a kneading-trough, a bench, and a roughly hewn bed. Among the farmers in good circumstances we find well made beds, wardrobes, all sorts of household utensils, bowls of wood or earthenware, pottery, and glasses. In clothing we also find great variety, from very good to very poor. Working clothes were almost always of canvas. Many peasants had only wooden shoes, or went barefoot, especially in the south. Heavy taxes on skins made shoes very expensive.

The food of the peasants was always coarse, and often insufficient. Meat appeared on the table but rarely. Sometimes they ate bacon. Except in sections where wine was plentiful, water was the usual beverage. In Brittany cider was drunk only in years of abundance. The basic foods were bread, soup, dairy products, and butter. Wheat bread was quite rare; only bread of rye and oats, and that frequently of poor quality, was known. In the poorest regions the peasants ate biscuits and porridge of buckwheat, or even of chestnuts or maize. Wheat and even rye served largely to pay the taxes and farm-rent, or were sold for export when this was permitted. Potatoes, which later became a staple food-product among the farmers, were grown only in a few particularly fertile regions, as

for example in certain parts of the coastal region of Brittany.

Clothes were often wretched. The description of Besnard in "Souvenirs d'un nonagénaire" probably is accurate:

> "The clothing of the poor peasants—and they were almost all poor—was even more pitiful, for they had only one outfit for winter and summer, regardless of the quality of the material. And their single pair of shoes, very thin and cleated with nails, which they procured at the time of their marriage, had to serve them the rest of their lives, or at least as long as the shoes lasted."

The women "wore a short cloak of coarse material or black caddis, to which was attached a hood for enveloping the head and neck in case of rain or cold." This description agrees pretty well with the reports of the inventories.

CRISES AND MISERY

If we would form an idea of the mode of life of the peasants, we must also distinguish between normal periods and critical times caused by foreign wars or bad crops.

In the eighteenth century the crises were less grave but no less frequent than in the seventeenth century. Certain provinces had directly borne the brunt of war, as for example Lorraine and Burgundy, which suffered terrible ravages, especially during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Around Dijon, as Gaston Roupnal shows, entire villages were depopulated and the fields were left uncultivated.

Even under the personal government of Louis XIV, which is usually praised as having been very prosperous, there was great suffering in the rural sections of every part of France. In 1675 Lesdiguières, governor of Dauphiné, wrote:

"It is a fact, and I assure you that I know whereof I speak, that the great majority of the inhabitants of this province lived during the winter only from acorns and roots, and that now they can be seen eating the grass of the fields and the bark of the trees."

After 1685 the misery even increased. In 1687 Henri d'Aguesseau and Anton Lefèvre d'Ormesson, making an investigation in Maine and around Orléans, declared:

"There are practically no peasants in comfortable circumstances. There are only poor coöperative farmers who have nothing. The landlords have to furnish them with cattle, lend them food, pay their *taille*, and take their crops in payment, and often even this does not cancel the debt. . . . The peasants live from buckwheat bread. Others, who have no buckwheat, live from roots of ferns boiled with the flour of barley or oats, and salt. . . . One finds them sleeping on straw. They have no clothing except what they wear, and that is very poor. They are destitute of furnishings and provisions. Everything in their huts points to dire need."

In 1684 the ambassador of Venice declared: "I have seen with my own eyes sections that formerly

had 700 or 800 homes, now reduced to 30 by the continual passage of troops of war."

During the last fifteen years of the reign of Louis XIV the misery grew more serious. The winter of 1709 witnessed a veritable famine.

All these facts must be taken into consideration if we would realize that during the last twenty-four years of the *ancien régime* there was, so far as these matters are concerned, undeniable improvement. During the eighteenth century the theatre of hostilities was almost always located beyond the frontiers, and there were fewer wars than during the era of the Great King. Nevertheless, there were great crises in 1725, 1740, 1759, from 1766 to 1768, from 1772 to 1776, in 1784 and 1785, and in 1789. Prices of food increased enormously. In 1785 the great drought compelled the farmers to sell a part of their cattle. In 1774 and again in 1789 the farmers had to live from turnips, milk, and even grass. In these critical years the day-laborers especially were affected, since they had nothing but the strength of their arms to depend upon.

But perhaps we should not paint the picture in too lurid colors. There were regions where agriculture was more prosperous, such as Flanders, Picardy, Normandy and Beauce, where the peasants were better off. This will be better understood when new monographs have been published. At present the best impression of this condition is given

by Arthur Young's "Travels in France." This English economist observes the contrast that exists between the various regions. He notes the prosperity of sections where the land is cultivated mostly by small proprietors. Coming from Spain to France, he admires the prosperity of Béarn:

"Here, without passing a city, a barrier, or even a wall, we enter a new world. From the poor, miserable roads of Catalonia we suddenly reach a splendid highway built with all the substantial quality and excellence that characterize the great highways of France. In place of beds of torrents, there are well constructed bridges. From a rude desert region we come suddenly into a country of agriculture and progress."

All in all, we may say that there was more prosperity, relatively at least, in the rural sections, especially after 1750. And yet the peasant at the time of the outbreak of the Revolution had a keener feeling for his suffering. The reason is perhaps, as has been well said, that "the very alleviation of his misery made him feel all the more acutely what remained of it. Perhaps he was disgusted with the present by the new ideas and hopes that had made their way even into the rural sections."

EPIDEMICS, MENDICITY, AND AID

A consequence of the misery and bad living conditions are the frequent epidemics, which, although less dreadful than those of the Middle Ages, were none the less quite fatal. Measles and especially

small-pox, typhus and typhoid fever claimed thousands of victims. In Brittany alone, during the year 1741, there were 80,000 deaths. It is a curious fact that the epidemics were more frequent and more formidable in the rural sections than in the cities. This is commented upon by the physicians of the period, and particularly by Dr. Bagot of Saint-Brieuc, in his "Observations médicinales" (Medical Observations). The peasants were almost entirely without medical attention. Only toward the end of the *ancien régime* did the government organize medical assistance, distributing remedies and appointing physicians in charge of epidemics.

Mendicity and vagrancy became veritable scourges against which the government was powerless. Especially in the rural sections the beggars and tramps were numerous. At critical times the day-laborers, reduced to misery, increased the number of these unfortunates. Many sought refuge in the cities, thinking that they would secure aid there. But the cities were no better off than the country.

In the face of this misery private charity was of no avail. Public assistance, organized in the cities, became increasingly inefficient in the country. Hospitals and charitable institutions, until then rather common, gradually disappeared. For example, in the section of Rennes, Fougères, and Vitré, at the end of the *ancien régime,* there re-

mained hospitals in only three out of 140 parishes. For feeding the poor there were, generally speaking, only small foundations. The parish clergy took pity on the unfortunates, but generally there were no resources available. The rich abbeys did not respond as much as might have been expected. Hence the state was obliged to do what it could. Serious efforts were made by ministers who were reformers, such as Turgot and Necker. Charitable workshops were established to help the poor, and stations for distributing alms. But at the approach of the Revolution only insignificant results had been achieved, and the question, now having assumed serious proportions, was brought before the Constituent Assembly, which elected a Committee on Mendicity.

AGRARIAN TROUBLES

Usually the rural population passively endured the charges that oppressed them. It is a curious fact that there were real insurrections only during the reign of Louis XIV, whose authority, it is usually claimed, was so absolute. And these insurrections took place precisely during the years that were the most prosperous of his entire reign. The peasants rebelled against the establishment of new taxes or the increase of old ones. In 1662 Boulonnais, the section around Boulogne, rebelled. In spite of ancient privileges, Louis XIV had wished

to impose upon the province, as he says in his *Mémoires,* "a very small sum," which "produced a bad effect." Six thousand persons took up arms, and the revolt was harshly repressed. In 1664 trouble arose in Béarn and Bigorre when the salt-tax was introduced. It lasted for several years, and the entire section was up in arms. In 1670 the absurd rumor spread in Vivarais that according to an edict a tax was to be levied on all births, clothes, and new hats. The whole section around Aubenas, some twenty parishes in all, rose under the leadership of Antoine du Roure.

When at the outbreak of the war with Holland in 1675, Colbert had to create new taxes (stamped paper, increase of the salt-tax, monopoly in tobacco, etc.), the section of Guyenne rebelled and the government mobilized two hundred companies to repress the insurrection. At the same time a part of Lower Brittany rebelled for the same reason. A certain number of parishes drew up what was known as the Peasant Code, a whole program of claims, and a sort of forerunner of the memorials of 1789. In fact the insurrection began to assume the proportions of a peasant revolt in defiance of the nobility. As is shown by the historian Jean Lemoine, who has written an excellent study upon the revolt over the stamped paper, the means of repression were terrible. The revolting peasants were hanged, and the troops proceeded to kill and pillage. All these insurrections seem to have been

spontaneous. As Ernest Lavisse remarks very accurately, "in the case of these 'emotions', which arise for the same reasons and at the same time in different places, there is no understanding necessary between the various sections. Brittany and Guyenne, Rennes and Bordeaux, each acted independently, without knowledge of the actions of the others. The individual conflagrations did not unite into a single flame."

It is interesting to note that during the eighteenth century, which is generally regarded as an era of decadence so far as the royal authority is concerned, there were no peasant uprisings comparable with the troubles that marked the reign of the Great King. The rural sections generally remained calm, either because the economic conditions were better than in the seventeenth century, as the quite considerable increase in population tends to prove, or because the provincial administration was better organized, and police protection was more efficient. Only just before the Revolution were there uprisings, caused by fear of famine because of the exportation of grain. And even so the government took measures to prevent suffering or to ward off its effects, by buying grain, subventioning the importers of grain and distributing it gratuitously or at a low price. Serious agrarian troubles arose only at the time of the Revolution, on the day after the 14th of July, and after the night of August 4, when the peasants wanted to secure the abolition

of the hated manorial system, the suppression of which had been promised by the bourgeoisie.

MORAL CONDITION

It is still more difficult to conceive the moral condition of the peasants than it is to get an idea of their material life. How shall we determine exactly the collective character of a class that is so numerous and whose economic condition is far from being uniform?

It seems clear that these people, who were in such a state of dependence, whose existence was often so miserable, and who were so poorly fed and deprived of every comfort, should often lack the spirit for work, and should be deficient in energy and initiative. This is true particularly of the poor sections, such as Brittany. It is the general impression of officials and travelers who were in this province during the eighteenth century. According to the governor Gallois de la Tour, in his memorial of 1733, there were a great number of regions where the population was industrious or at least hard-working. On the other hand, in the poorest sections, the inhabitants were "idlers," drunkards and boors, "without any initiative," and neglected planting and stock-raising. Toward the end of the *ancien régime* an intelligent observer, de Brémontier, notes the short-sightedness of the peasants of Brittany:

"The tiller works only for himself. His foresight does not extend beyond what is necessary. He is unconcerned about his future needs, and he relies constantly upon an ever just Providence, that often dooms him to privations well deserved because of his negligence. When this happens, his cup of misery is full."

The Revolution, by lightening the burdens of the peasants and freeing them from the evils of the manorial system, and by allowing them to profit from the sale of the national property, that is by increasing their own possessions, helped to make them more active and more energetic. Besnard in his *Souvenirs* notes a typical example of this on the lands of the old abbey of Fontevrault.

Often brutality was a trait characteristic of the peasant. Frequently the servants were maltreated. In Tréguier in Brittany a court declares that "the contempt for the laws and the insolence of certain prosperous peasants of this section have increased to such a degree that it is not possible for a servant to work for them without incurring the risk of being continually flogged or reviled, or both." Brawls were frequent, involving either individuals or the inhabitants of two entire villages. That is the reason why in many regions the village festivals, the so-called "assemblies," which were occasions for general amusement and often ended in brawls, were looked forward to with apprehension. That was especially the case in sections like Brittany, where the population, scattered in isolated

houses or hamlets, was ill suited for social life.

Another incentive for violence was drunkenness. To be sure, there was infinitely less drinking of whiskey in the rural sections than there is today, and there was less alcoholism. Nevertheless the parish memorials of 1789 demand the restriction of the numerous inns, not only in the villages, but also along the roads.

INSTRUCTION

It may be said that the rural population was very uneducated and that the great majority of peasants could neither read nor write.

In certain regions, particularly in the east and north, schools were more numerous, but elsewhere, especially in the west, many parishes had no schools at all; and girls' schools were even more scarce. Since usually no foundation assured the maintenance of the schools, they were in charge, more or less regularly, of the priest or his vicar. We must also add that because the instruction depended upon private charity—the small schools were often called "charity schools,"—it was necessarily rather precarious. Sometimes schools remained closed for years. Furthermore the elementary instruction was very poor indeed. It consisted only of reading, writing and the catechism. The investigation conducted by the Abbot Grégoire in 1790, so well utilized by Ferd. Brunot in vol. VII of his *Histoire*

de la Langue française, clearly shows the insufficient number of schools and the poor quality of the instruction offered by them. How much it left to be desired is shown in an indirect way by the project attributed to Turgot in the *Mémoires sur les municipalités* (Memorials on the municipalities), drawn up by Dupont de Nemours, as well as by the splendid programs of national education worked out by the revolutionary assemblies.

At any rate there can be no doubt as to the enormous amount of illiteracy in the rural sections. One of the many proofs of this is the fact that the parish memorials of 1789, especially in Brittany, bear very few signatures, and frequently the memorials state that "all those able to write have signed," or that "the majority could not write their names." The minutes of the Assembly of Pontivy of 1790 note that "in the rural municipalities the mayors and municipal officers can hardly write." The signatures on the marriage contracts that have come down to us are for the most part illegible. Finally there are numerous memorials of 1789 demanding "a school teacher, of whom the children have been deprived up to the present," and asking for the establishment of "good schools."

PARISH ADMINISTRATION

And yet we can notice the first beginnings of a political life. The peasants were beginning to be-

come clearly conscious of their collective interests. They took part actively in the administration of the parish. It is true that the parish assembly, the body of inhabitants, lost its authority more and more to the advantage of a small body of notables, called in Brittany the "general" of the parish. The "general" or council of the parish comprised the lord, his seneschal, or his fiscal attorney, the rector, twelve deliberants, and the two treasurers or church-wardens on duty. The deliberants could be chosen only from among the former treasurers. The great majority of inhabitants took part but rarely in the administration.

The parish had officers that executed the decisions of the general. They were the recorders, the beadles and especially the church-wardens or treasurers. The latter, elected for one year, administered the funds and revenues of the parish, the brotherhoods and foundations, called together the general, and proposed the agenda for its deliberations. They had charge also of the maintenance of foundlings, of the equipment of the militia, of the administration of the ordinary revenues and the extraordinary taxes. They had a financial responsibility. Their duties were therefore difficult and burdensome, and of course the peasants tried to evade them as much as possible.

The parish generals were at the same time fabric councils and municipal councils. Hence they had twofold duties, those of the fabric, which was gen-

erally quite prosperous, since it had a definite budget, and those of the "external government," the condition of which was almost always deplorable because the rural communities had neither a budget nor regular receipts to satisfy their momentary needs. In fact they had nothing but temporary resources, supported by extraordinary taxes and ruinous expedients.

During the eighteenth century the temporal administration of the parish developed and was complicated by virtue of the increased needs on the part of the royal treasury. The duties of the assessors and collectors of the taxes became increasingly heavy. A military syndic was created to provide for the lodging of troops, and a syndic for compulsory labor, assisted by deputies, to direct the difficult administration of compulsory labor.

Moreover the parish administration was often directly under the supervision of the state. For every municipal act the approval of the government was necessary. The syndics were really the agents of the "intendant," or governor, of the province who used them for all administrative duties. The authority of the lord was exercised also over the rural parishes. Indeed, it was one of his officers (seneschal or fiscal attorney) who presided over the deliberations of the general. Yet in the eighteenth century we witness the rural parishes defending themselves quite vigorously against the usurpations of the lords, protesting energet-

ically against the encroachments upon the rights of the inhabitants, and engaging in long-drawn-out and expensive suits against the noble proprietors.

The movement tending to increase the temporal functions of the parish administrations was bound to lead to the eventual separation of the spiritual and temporal. In this respect the edict of June 25, 1787, establishing in the rural sections as well as in the cities uniformly organized municipalities, was of great importance. In each community there was established a council composed of the lord, the priest, and three, six or nine elective members, depending upon the number of inhabitants. These members represented the parochial assembly, for they were elected by secret ballot by all the inhabitants paying at least 10 livres in real and personal taxes. The general assemblies were really nothing but electoral assemblies. All in all, it was a genuine municipal organization, in the modern sense of the term.

We see then that the peasants were beginning to take an active part in political life. Irritated by the reaction of the lords, which marks the end of the *ancien régime*, they did not hesitate to voice their claims loudly in the parish memorials of 1789. And when the Revolution came, they forced the hand of the revolutionary assemblies, by petitions and acts of violence, such as attacks upon castles and the burning of archives, and compelled them to

abolish the manorial system and to make their lands completely autonomous.

THE PEASANT QUESTION AND PUBLIC OPINION

The reforms made by the Convention were destined to be radical, since they abolished all manorial rights without indemnity. The question was settled forever.

But the revolutionary agitation was prepared by a powerful movement of public opinion, which appeared particularly during the second half of the eighteenth century. The physiocrats considered that the manorial system, because of all its harassing obstacles, was harmful to the progress of agricultural production. But their claims in this matter were of a very abstract nature.

However, the kings of Sardinia, by their edicts of 1762, 1771 and 1778, freed the peasants of Savoy of mortmain and decreed the abolition of the manorial dues. Hereupon Voltaire was encouraged to carry on his campaign in favor of the serfs of Franche-Comté with more zeal. In one of his memorials he recalls that "the king of Sardinia has freed all lands in Savoy of real and personal mortmain."

Then in 1776 there appeared the celebrated pamphlet of Boncerf on "The Disadvantages of the Feudal Rights," secretly encouraged by Turgot. In spite of his extreme moderation—he demanded obligatory redemption only in the case of the suc-

cessors of the present lords,—he was condemned by the Parliament of Paris. Voltaire adhered fully to the ideas of Boncerf and arose vigorously against the Parliament, denouncing its egotism:

"To propose the abolition of the feudal rights is tantamount to attacking the holdings of the gentlemen of the Parliament themselves, most of whom possess fiefs. These gentlemen are therefore personally interested in protecting, defending and encouraging respect for the feudal rights. It is the case of the church, the nobility and the members of Parliament. These three classes, too often opposed to one another, should unite against the common enemy. The Church will excommunicate those authors who may undertake the defense of the people, and will burn the authors as well as their writings. And by these means the writings will be victoriously refuted."

Jean Jacques Rousseau also did much to make the cause of the peasants popular. In the "Nouvelle Héloise," which enjoyed such a great measure of success, he steadfastly contrasts the artificial luxury of Paris with the simple and sound customs of the country folk. Saint Preux, traveling in Valais, admires the comfort and happiness of the mountaineers. He says: "Food is abundant, without any market toward the outside, and without any show of luxury within; nor does the mountaineer planter, whose work is his pleasure, become less industrious on that account."

The true genius of the French people Rousseau finds not in Paris, but in the provinces and remote rural sections.

The feeling for nature which he helped so much to disseminate attracted the attention of the city inhabitants to the rural population. The novel and the theatre began to depict in an idealistic and somewhat misleading, insipid fashion, the rural customs. In the "Tales" of Florian we meet only shepherds and shepherdesses. Marie Antoinette at Trianon posed as a farmer's wife. Although we should not ascribe to these manifestations of what would today be called a new form of snobbishness, more importance than they deserve, yet we should remember that to a certain extent they reveal the tendencies of a period.

OVERWHELMING IMPORTANCE OF THE PEASANT QUESTION

The peasant question was bound to be of importance in a country in which the rural population was numerically so important, where industry on a large scale was only in its infancy, and where agricultural production was more important than all other branches. Vauban had already said that "the real wealth of a kingdom lies in the abundance of its supply of food, which is so necessary for human life." Furthermore the population of a country, and its rural population in particular, is one of its greatest assets. In the eighteenth century the interest which intelligent officials, as well as economists, took in agricultural questions, attracted

attention to the condition of that class which alone tilled the soil. In England during the same period it was the commercial and industrial questions that attracted public notice more than anything else.

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Chapter III

The Clergy

THE ESTATE OF THE CLERGY

Although quite varying conditions can be found among them, the clergy constituted a definite estate, in fact the only real estate existing in France during the *ancien régime*. The special discipline to which all members were subjected and the celibacy which they were forced to observe distinguished them as a class from the rest of the subjects. The clergy had its special courts, the so-called officialities, which in the eighteenth century considered only purely spiritual cases arising from the sacraments, infractions of ecclesiastical discipline, and also certain suits between members of the clergy.

The clergy as a class was alone represented before the king by an assembly, the "assembly of the clergy." It was instituted in the sixteenth century with a view to the treasury, in order to have a body that could vote the contribution which the clergy was expected to make to the king. It met every ten years to renew the concession relative to the ordinary *décimes*, and every five years to vote the

"gratuitous gift." The deputies to the general assembly were elected by the provincial assemblies, which met at the seat of the various archbishoprics and were composed of the deputies of the suffragan dioceses. The provincial assembly designated two deputies of the first order (the high clergy) and two of the second (low clergy), but the authority was in the hands of the first order. The general assembly, beginning with the time of Louis XIV, accepted the demands of the king without any real opposition, although it actually had the right to increase or decrease the amount of the gift. The amount voted was assessed against the various dioceses. The diocesan offices in turn assessed the individual members of the clergy.

The general assemblies took charge also of the "defense of the faith," called for secular support against the heretics, especially the Protestants, condemned the books that were contrary to religion, and dealt with all questions concerning the discipline and organization of the Church and the maintenance of its privileges, and public instruction (especially after the expulsion of the Jesuits). It is clear then how important for general history are the Minutes of the Assemblies of the Clergy and the reports of its agents. The assembly designated two general agents whose duty it was to defend the interests of the estate and to manage its finances.

Even in temporal matters the clergy exercised

great authority. It alone was in charge of the registers of births, marriages and deaths, for the public register was in the hands of the Church. It had absolute control over public instruction and charity. The parish assemblies were under the jurisdiction of the priests. It was the latter who gave notice of edicts and proclaimed a monitory from the pulpit whenever a crime had been committed. In short, secular society depended largely upon the ecclesiastical power.

NUMBER OF ECCLESIASTICS

This powerful class was not very numerous. The Royal Almanach indicates 135 bishoprics and archbishoprics, and 34,658 charges. But the number of priests and vicars can be estimated at about 60,000. There were 2800 prelates and canons of cathedrals, and 5600 canons of collegiate churches, not to mention 3000 ecclesiastics without benefices. In all there were 71,000 secular priests. It is more difficult to determine the number of regulars and monks of all kinds. It seems that their number did not exceed 60,000, and at the end of the *ancien régime* this number was appreciably reduced.

THE PROPERTY AND WEALTH OF THE CLERGY

When we speak of the wealth of the clergy we must bear in mind their small number. They

comprised about 1.8 per cent of the population. We have already noted that the property of the clergy amounted to 5 or 6 per cent of the territory at the most. The revenues from this property did not exceed 80 or 100 millions. The tithes represented a more considerable sum, about 123 millions. But as will be seen presently, the distribution of this wealth was very uneven.

Furthermore, in considering even the richest holdings of the clergy—the bishoprics, chapters and abbeys—we are dealing only in rare cases with great domains held by a single tenant. In general the ecclesiastical property was divided into rather small parcels, composed particularly of isolated farms. Rebillon in his "Situation économique du clergé dans les districts de Rennes, Fougères et Vitré" (Economic Condition of the Clergy in the Districts of Rennes, Fougères and Vitré) has proved this quite clearly. All in all the rural property of a bishopric and a chapter, as for example those of Rennes, seems insignificant. The bishopric of Rennes had an income of about 60,000 livres, but it enjoyed the revenues from numerous tithes. As for the abbeys and their convents, their urban property was more considerable than their rural property. At Rennes they owned a great part of the real estate and encompassed the entire city, so to speak. It would seem that everywhere in France similar conditions prevailed, even in such regions as the northern section, where the percent-

age of ecclesiastical property was greater than elsewhere.

DUES PAID BY THE CLERGY

The dues represented by the *décimes* paid to the king, and the gratuitous gift seem very small in comparison with the revenues we have mentioned. The *décime ordinaire* due the king amounted only to 400,000 livres. The gratuitous gift was somewhat heavier and rose continually at the end of the *ancien régime*. It was 16 millions in 1773, and 30 millions in 1780. On an average it amounted to 5,400,000 livres per year. But the clergy contracted loans in order to pay these sums. This debt reached 134 millions in 1784. The king, however, paid a part of the interest, namely 500,000 livres, until 1780, and thereafter one million. From 1782 on he paid 2,500,000 livres. On the other hand, the clergy was exempt from every other tax, also from the capitation and the twentieth taxes, which even the nobility in part had to pay. The contributions of the clergy, Necker declares, are "less by 700,000 or 800,000 livres than what they would be if the clergy, enjoying the same privileges as the nobility, were subject to the ordinary system of distribution." In the eighteenth century particularly, the State, pressed by need for money, tried to break down the financial immunity of the clergy. Machault tried to make

them subject to the twentieth taxes, and directed his efforts first against the "foreign" clergy, that is the clergy of the provinces considered foreign. Since they were not represented in the assemblies, he thought that they would yield more readily to the exigencies of the royal treasury.

THE HIGH CLERGY AND THE NOBILITY

During the seventeenth century we still find among the high clergy a certain number of commoners, as Huet, Fléchier and Bossuet. But in the eighteenth century it was composed almost exclusively of nobles. The abbots, almost all nominated by the king, were chosen well-nigh exclusively from among the nobility. Moreover 840 abbeys out of 1100 were granted *in commendam,* as the expression was, that is to a beneficed clergyman who merely exercised the function and took for himself one-half or two-thirds of the revenue of the abbey.

In short, the majority of the old lucrative abbeys were granted to favorities, and Taine in his "Ancien Régime" says very aptly: "I have counted eighty-three abbeys possessed by almoners, chaplains, preceptors or readers of the king, the queen, the princes or princesses. One of them, the abbot of Vermont, has 80,000 livres of income in benefices."

If we consider the diocesan seats we find that at the end of the *ancien régime* they were all held by

nobles. While during the reign of Louis XIV commoners such as Bossuet could look forward to splendid ecclesiastical careers, a very competent priest in the eighteenth century, the abbot Beauvais, obtained only with difficulty the wretched bishopric of Senez. In 1789, as the abbot Sicard says, not a single bishop from the ranks of the common people could be found. If we peruse the lists of bishops and archbishops of this time we are confronted with the names of the highest and oldest families of France, Montmorency, Rohan, La Rochefoucauld, Clermont-Tonnerre, and Talleyrand-Périgord, while priests of the low or even the average nobility, as for example Boisgelin, secured episcopal seats only with difficulty. If a man belonged to the high nobility, his career was as a matter of course rapid and triumphant. Between the ages of thirty and forty he became archbishop or bishop. A Luynes and a Rohan were even consecrated at twenty-six. In certain families there was an accumulation of ecclesiastical dignities. Louis de Rohan succeeded his uncle as bishop of Strasbourg. Three members of the La Rochefoucauld family had the seats at Rouen, Beauvais and Saintes. These were lucrative benefices reserved for the younger sons of the great families. Even from infancy they were groomed for the great dignities of the Church and tonsured without concern for their vocation or natural leanings.

THE REGULAR CLERGY

During the first half of the seventeenth century the regular clergy had, as a result of the Counter-Reformation, experienced an era of reform. Many new corporations were created. Among them were: in 1602 the friars of St. John of God, pledged to the care of the sick; in 1606 the Ursulines, pledged to teaching; in 1608 the Capuchins; in 1611 the Congregation of the Oratory was founded by Pierre de Bérulle for the instruction of priests. Somewhat later came the Sisters of Calvary; the Visitandines; then the Lazaristes or missionary priests; the Eudistes, who vowed to devote themselves to teaching; and in 1686 Baptiste de la Salle established the Congregation of the Friars of the Christian Churches. In many cities there was a veritable beehive of religious orders, possessing much real estate and often entire sections. At Dijon, for instance, there were a score of religious orders, among them the abbey Saint-Étienne, the abbey Saint-Bénigne, the Holy Chapel, the Chapel of the Rich, the Fathers of the Oratory, the Jesuits, the Carthusians, the Gray Friars, the Capuchins, the Minims, the Ursulines, the Visitandines, the Bernardines, the Carmelites, the Friars of Refuge, the Ladies of Saint Julien, the Jacobines, the House of the Good Shepherd, the Lazaristes, etc.

But in the eighteenth century, especially during the second half, there was a growing decadence,

particularly from the point of view of morality. In the old contemplative or mendicant orders there was a marked relaxation of discipline, and the discredit into which the orders fell made it difficult to fill their ranks. The prelates themselves took a severe attitude toward the monks. Thus Conzié, the archbishop of Tours, wrote in 1778: "The Gray Friars are in a state of degradation in this province. The bishops are complaining of the debauched, disorderly conduct of these friars."

In 1765 the assembly of the clergy itself urged a reform among the regular clergy. The government, without calling upon the authority of the Pope to interfere in a question of internal order, established a "commission for the regulars" in 1766. It functioned until 1789. This commission suppressed several congregations, and in many cases joined into one group monks scattered in various organizations. It reduced the number of monks from 26,000 to 17,000. From 1770 to 1789 the number of Benedictines decreased from 6434 to 4300, and the number of Franciscans fell from 9820 to 6064. But the laxity of morals continued. And it must be said in addition that many monks were favorable to the new ideas, read the writings of the philosophers, and were impregnated with the new doctrines. From among this class the constitutional clergy recruited most of its adherents at the time of the Revolution.

The decadence was less felt among the new corporations, especially among those composed of women, such as the Sisters of Charity, of Wisdom, and of the Good Shepherd, who were engaged in the work of instruction and charity. Their material condition, too, was less prosperous. They possessed little real property and derived income only from personal property. Their principal resources were furnished by alms and by the support of pensioners. The old abbeys, on the other hand, often enjoyed considerable revenues.

THE HIGH SECULAR CLERGY

In many cases the bishops possessed temporal power which conferred dignity and wealth upon them. A considerable number can be named who held old ecclesiastical seigniories. Thus the bishop of Strasbourg, who was prince-bishop of Strasburg and landgrave of Alsace, had large domains in that province. They netted him an income of about 800,000 livres. The archbishop of Cambrai was duke of Cambrai, and his domains had a population of 75,000 inhabitants. The archbishop of Besançon, as bishop of Strasbourg, was a prince of the Empire.

The bishops and archbishops received a great portion of the revenues of the clergy. It seems, if the Royal Almanach is correct, that certain dioceses, especially in the southeast, were quite poor, netting

only a few thousand livres. They were not very extensive, either. Most of the bishoprics of Brittany had less than 30,000 livres in revenues. Yet it seems that the official publications underestimated these revenues. However this may be, some of the bishoprics brought their incumbents more than 40,000 livres in revenues. That of Rennes netted almost 60,000; Condom, 70,000; Verdun, 74,000; Beauvais, 96,000; and Strasbourg, the richest, 400,000. Most of the archbishoprics netted from 40,000 to 70,000 livres. Rouen brought 100,000; Albi, 120,000; Narbonne, 160,000; Paris, 200,000. Moreover, the bishops possessed almost all the abbeys in commendam, which generally almost doubled their revenue. Thus Berni, the archbishop of Albi, received 100,000 livres in this way; Dillon, the archbishop of Narbonne, 120,000; La Rochefoucauld, the archbishop of Rouen, 130,000. It is true that the prelates had to pay numerous pensions, which diminished their income.

The chapters, whether they depended upon a cathedral or a collegiate, also enjoyed considerable privileges. Many canons had rich prebends, without the obligation of heavy duties. Certain chapters were open only to nobles, as for instance those of Strasbourg and Lyons. The aristocratic chapters for women bound their incumbents only to temporary celibacy and to attendance at certain masses. It has been said that "they repudiated all

the spiritual disadvantages and preserved only the material advantages." They were merely "seminaries for marriageable young girls." The excessive privileges of the various chapters constituted one of the abuses against which public opinion turned with increasing vehemence in the course of the eighteenth century.

MODE OF LIFE AMONG THE HIGH CLERGY

A rather large number of bishops and archbishops had a great train of retainers, an open table, a residence at Paris and a luxurious country home. Thus the cardinal of Brienne lived in the style of a great lord on his domain at Brienne. Dillon, at Hautefontaine in Picardy, led a life of pleasure rather than a religious life. He went on the hunt three times a week and attended the theatre. At Saverne the cardinal de Rohan, bishop of Strasburg, gave magnificent feasts at which there were hundreds of guests.

No doubt such considerable pomp was rather unusual. But many prelates acquitted themselves of their duties in a very perfunctory manner. Often they preferred to reside at Paris, rather than in their dioceses. In 1764 it was found that more than forty bishops lived in the capital, and rarely there were less than a score there. Many prelates preached but seldom, administered the sacraments

only by proxy, made practically no pastoral visits and entrusted the administration of their dioceses to their vicars general or to their suffragans.

The members of the high clergy were also reproached with acquitting themselves only poorly of the obligations attached to their duties or arising from the tithes collected by them. They were little concerned about the maintenance of religion and even less about their charitable duties. The great tithe-owners hardly helped the poor. This fact was often affirmed and deplored by the parish clergy. But toward the end of the *ancien régime* a certain number of prelates showed themselves more compassionate, used their funds for constructing hospitals and arranged for the establishment of charitable offices in the rural sections. But only a minority, it seems, did this.

Instruction was in the hands of the clergy, who had absolute control over the public and private schools and appointed the teachers. But the people's schools were still very rare, except in the eastern part of France. The instruction was very mediocre, and, as we have already seen, the illiterates constituted the great majority of the rural population.

Hence it is not surprising that many of the memorials of 1789 demanded that the ecclesiastical resources be devoted to charity and education, and that the tithes "be allocated to the purpose for which they were originally intended."

THE ADMINISTRATIVE BISHOPS

Nevertheless, toward the end of the *ancien régime* a certain number of bishops became interested in the temporal administration of the region in which their episcopal seat was located. In the sections of the Estates, in Brittany and more particularly in Languedoc, they took an active part in the assemblies of the province. In the latter province many bishops engaged in the construction of roads, the cultivation of fallow land and the development of the canals.

Champion de Cicé, first bishop of Rodez and later archbishop of Bordeaux, distinguished himself as an administrator, and at the time of the Constituent Assembly was appointed guardian of the seals. The archbishop of Toulouse, Lomenie de Brienne, had done useful work in his diocese before becoming prime minister toward the end of the monarchy. Boisgelin, the archbishop of Aix, was also a competent administrator and enjoyed great popularity in Provence on the eve of the Revolution. Champion de Cicé and Boisgelin represented the liberal tendency among the high clergy. They were partisans of that "episcopal Gallicanism" which succeeded in spreading during the Napoleonic era under the régime of the Concordat. They were destined to form the bond between the clergy of the *ancien régime* and that of contemporary France.

Another type of administrative bishop, but quite different from Boisgelin and Champion de Cicé, was J. F. de la Marche, bishop of Saint-Pol de Léon. He played an important part in all the sessions of the Estates of Brittany, where he showed remarkable resourcefulness, to the great advantage of his class. Several times he exerted himself to smooth over the disagreements arising between the nobility and the third estate, and between the assembly and the royal government. At several sessions he presided with great efficiency over the commission on finances. Quite unlike Boisgelin and Champion de Cicé, he hardly ever visited the royal court. For twenty years he resided almost without interruption in his diocese. He devoted himself conscientiously to his episcopal duties, making his pastoral visits regularly, watching over the progress of ecclesiastical studies and the training of priests, and reëstablishing, in great part out of his own resources, the college Saint-Pol de Léon. He was also interested in charity and tried to create new charitable institutions. No doubt the case of Mgr. de la Marche was not as exceptional as might be believed, but the prelates who did their duties conscientiously did not appeal so much to the imagination of their contemporaries as those brilliant churchmen whose sumptuous feasts attracted attention. Furthermore they were not won over by the liberal ideas and did not flatter public opinion. Mgr. de la Marche did not tire of opposing

the new order of things, and of showing his hostility to all projects of reform. He was one of the most ardent opponents of the Civil Constitution; among the emigré priests at London he represented the party of irreconcilables; he refused to recognize the Concordat; and he died embittered and in exile.

Indeed, we must not be deceived with regard to the liberalism of the high clergy. They protested almost as a body against the concession of civil status to the Protestants. If they rose against despotism, it was because they felt that their privileges were endangered by progressive ministers. Even upon the eve of the Revolution they assumed a haughty attitude toward the lower clergy.

THE LOW CLERGY

The low clergy did not by any means form a single class. We distinguish essentially between the vicars, the curates and the habituated priests.

Among the vicars some were in easy circumstances, especially those living in the cities, who were assured a revenue from the surplice fees. But many depended only upon the insignificant tithes that the great tithe-collectors gave them. In the districts of Rennes, Fougères and Vitré, Rébillon has proved that 44 rectors had an income less than 1000 livres, while 56 received from 1000 to 2000 livres per year, 30 from 2000 to 4000, and only

14 a sum greater than 4000 livres. Many priests had only their congruous portion to live upon. Fixed by the declaration of 1686 at 300 livres for vicars, and by the declaration of 1768 at 500 livres for vicars and 200 for curates, this congruous portion was, in 1786, increased to 750 livres for the former class and 300 livres for the latter. But at the end of the *ancien régime* the cost of living had increased considerably. The congruists lived in poverty.

The curates, most of whom had no prospect of ever obtaining a charge, formed a veritable ecclesiastical proletariat, upon whom all the parish duties usually fell. And the habituated priests, who lived upon a few foundations and from the income of a few masses, were even more abject.

The low clergy, so poorly remunerated, was responsible for a goodly share of the ordinary and extraordinary dues that the clergy as a class had to pay the king. There was the greatest possible inequality in distribution, not only between the high and the low clergy, but also between the different ranks of the low clergy, although the congruists were generally spared.

LIFE OF THE LOW CLERGY ACCORDING TO A CONTEMPORARY

A canon of the abbey of Beauport, situated in the diocese of Saint-Brieuc, has left us a very vivid

description of the condition of the low clergy in that part of Brittany:

"Most of the charges of Normandy were amply endowed, but ours were generally poor or mediocre . . . Some charges, however, received tithes, but a small number in comparison with the congruists, and almost always in the small parishes, where the value of the tithe was often only the equivalent of the portion . . .

"In Tréguier there were perhaps ten charges from 100 louis to 4000 livres. They were also considered as places of favor and were usually held by nobles. They were called parishes of abbots whom the Revolution dispossessed . . .

"Saint-Brieuc had few parishes in which the tithe and the surplice fees netted a thousand écus to the incumbent. Six or seven were appointed, of which two were held by nobles and two by regulars. Some brought in 100 louis, or 2000 livres, others from 1500 to 1800 livres, and they were considered very good. The mediocre ones ran from 1200 to 1500 livres, and the greatest number from 1000 to 1200 livres. There were some that brought even less. Where the charge netted only the congruous portion of 500 livres, it was necessary, in order to double the sum, that beside the 180 livres to which his masses (at the rate of 12 sols per mass) amounted, the vicar should derive 320 livres from the church, either through a third of the oblations, which were usually negligible, or in baptisms (at the rate of six or eight sols per baptism), in marriages at the rate of 40 sols, and in fees, burials and attendance at services, fixed at 16 sols, which depended upon the prosperity of the population of the parishes.

"This was the lot of our vicars and the outlook of their curates before the Revolution. Happy in a situation in which, after ten or twelve years of faithful service and good conduct, they finally obtained a parish, they were then com-

pelled to settle down and fit out a home. For this purpose their small savings hardly sufficed, and they were compelled to contract debts on the strength of their future earnings. Nephews, nieces and parents frequently came to the vicarage, for a vicar was naturally considered a man of affluence and the natural means of support of his relatives. There was indeed much misery, even in the better parishes, unless they were managed with great order and economy."

RELATIONS OF THE LOW CLERGY AND THE HIGH CLERGY

The low clergy did not participate in any way in the administration of their class. In the diocesan assemblies, gathered for the apportionment of the tithes that had to be raised for the king, the parish priests took a part only under exceptional conditions, and never as representatives of their confrères. In the assemblies of Estates, in Brittany and Languedoc, they did not have a share in the election of the deputies of the clergy.

Only rarely did the bishops pay any attention to the vicars of their diocese. They felt that the latter belonged to another race than themselves. They never received them at their table. A bishop who otherwise was well disposed to his vicars, declared: "they are coarse, shabby and ignorant, and one must be fond of the odor of garlic in order to feel happy in the society of those who ponder heaven and earth."

THE GRIEVANCES OF THE LOW CLERGY

At the end of the *ancien régime* the vicars began to revolt against this attitude of their bishops and to compare their miserable lot with the opulence of their superiors. The vicar of Marolles in Normandy, writing in 1789, expressed the feelings of many of his confrères:

"We, unfortunate vicars living upon congruous portions, we, usually entrusted with the largest parishes, we, whose lot cries out to the stones and rafters of our miserable vicarages, we must tolerate prelates who would prosecute through their guards a poor vicar cutting a cane in their forests, for support on his long journeys over the highways. . . . When they pass, the vicar is obliged to fall to the ground and lie supinely upon the hillside, to protect himself against the hoofs and the mud-splashing of their horses, and also against the wheels, or perhaps the whip of an insolent driver. And then, all dirty, with his wretched cane in the one hand, and his old hat in the other, he must greet, humbly and speedily, through the curtain of the closed and gilded carriage, the puffed-up prelate who is snoring upon the wool of the herd that the poor vicar pastures and of which he may keep only the dung and the grease."

Several times the vicars ventured to assemble in order to draw up their claims, and especially to ask for an increase of their congruous portion. This was done for example by the vicars of Provence and Dauphiné in 1779. In vain did the bishops in 1782 obtain from the king a declaration

forbidding the vicars to hold meetings. The low clergy showed itself increasingly hostile to the high clergy and increasingly favorable to the claims of the third estate. This is revealed in the pamphlet that appeared upon the eve of the Revolution, bearing the title: "Les curés du Dauphiné à leurs confrères les recteurs de Bretagne" (The vicars of Dauphiné to their confrères, the rectors of Brittany). In it is found the following characteristic passage:

"The bishops are the heads of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but in civil and political matters they are only citizens like ourselves. . . . Let them leave to us the right of having our own feelings. . . . The interest of the people and that of the vicars are inseparable. If the people suffer oppression, the vicars suffer degradation at the hands of the high clergy."

THE VICARS AND THE ELECTIONS TO THE STATES GENERAL

These sentiments were bound to make themselves felt at the time the States General met. To be sure, only a few of the memorials drawn up by the low clergy have come down to us. The diocesan assemblies, in which the high clergy prevailed, were not interested in preserving them. Nevertheless a few have been preserved. We have, for instance, those of the vicars of the bailiwick of Auxerre, which will be published soon. We have also the memorials of members of the low clergy

of Brittany, who felt that if the high clergy deemed it necessary to hold their electoral assembly apart (at Saint-Brieuc), they too should form diocesan assemblies in which they might elect deputies.

The principal claims of the memorial of the diocese of Rennes, for example, are as follows:

"That in future no other distinctions but those of hierarchy be recognized among the clergy. Thus there will disappear a great number of abuses that are striking and revolting to everyone."

The memorial demanded also the remedy of those abuses that were slurred over in the election of bishops and the collation of benefices. But the thing that concerned the vicars of the diocese of Rennes particularly was the question of the tithes:

"That the tithes, collected from the pastors and the poor, be restored to them eventually, because they are the only ones who can legitimately possess them."

The memorial demanded also that the "regular corporations" be indemnified by the "pooling of the simple benefices." Also that provision be made for the congruist rectors. In a word, the demand was made that a "more equal distribution of the ecclesiastical wealth" be made.

Furthermore ecclesiastical dignities should no longer be granted to favorites: "That the canonicates and the dignities of the cathedrals be granted in future only to those who have devoted their lives diligently to the ministry." It was demanded that the clergy of the kingdom should renounce all financial privileges. But if the *décimes* to be paid to the king were to be continued, the rolls should be sent to all contributors, for they can not be refused "either the right or

the means of judging the actions of those who represent them."

So far as "civil and political affairs" were concerned, the clergy of the diocese of Rennes expressed desires similar to those of the third estate. They demanded periodical meetings of the States General, the abolition of the present taxes, the establishment of a constitution, the equality of political rights, "without class distinction," and the equality of all in the face of "the public dues" in proportion to the ability of each to pay. Also that the individual liberty of the citizens be guaranteed, and that "the *lettres de cachet* and all other arbitrary orders be abolished." Furthermore that commerce be freed from all embarrassments on the part of the royal fisc and the monopoly." Just as the memorials of the peasants, so those of the clergy too demanded the employment, in the rural sections, of trained, competent midwives. Finally they demanded that, "in order to regenerate the French people, there should be an effort made to improve education, both in the cities and in the rural sections as well."

This shows clearly the rôle that was to be played by the vicars elected to the States General. It was they who, by deserting the ranks of the clergy and joining the third estate, decided the fate of the Revolution and assured the triumph of the National Assembly. And only after the Civil

Constitution had been granted did a considerable part of the low clergy refuse to recognize it and abandon the cause of the Revolution.

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Chapter IV

The Nobility

THE SOURCES OF THE NOBILITY

In theory the basis of nobility is birth. A man is noble "by birth" if he can trace his nobility back four generations at least. And a nobleman's reputation depends upon the number of noble ancestors to whom he can point.

Yet the nobility of the time included a more or less considerable number of newly created nobles. This had always been the case. During the early days of feudalism the man who could arm himself and serve as a horseman became a vassal of the leader in war, no matter what his origin may have been. His services were rewarded by the concession of a fief. The owners of fiefs then claimed that they formed a closed class; nevertheless they had to admit into their ranks those who had acquired lands of the nobility or had been ennobled by a prince or the king.

Patents of nobility that were usually purchased for money became increasingly numerous from the sixteenth century on. Under Louis XIV the cash (*finance*) paid by the candidate was only 6000

livres. And, as Voltaire says in his "Essai sur les mœurs" (Essay on Customs), "a huge number of citizens, bankers, surgeons, merchants, servants of princes, and clerks obtained patents of nobility" and laid the foundations for noble families.

There were also numerous offices and functions of state that brought with them hereditary nobility, for example the positions of chancellor, guardian of the seal, secretary of state, governor, commandant in chief, and presiding judge of the sovereign courts. The offices of the high bench eventually also conferred nobility upon their incumbents. Thus in the eighteenth century almost all the members of the parliaments were noblemen, and the rule became established, particularly in Brittany, that the magistracies could be conferred only upon members of the nobility. Even positions that were practically superfluous, as those of the secretaries of the king, which were sinecures, conferred nobility, and, as Necker declares, they were very numerous, there being over 900 of them. To be sure, they cost 120,000 livres, but they made it possible for every commoner who had become wealthy to join the ranks of the nobility. The same is true of the positions in the offices of the finances, numbering 740. The very numerous municipal posts also conferred nobility as a general rule. The nobility of the judicial gown and that of the bell, at first distinct from the nobility of the sword, were finally confused with it.

Lastly one could secure a patent of nobility by acquiring a nobleman's estate, that is, a manor. The possession of manorial rights conferred nobility in the long run, although the ordinance of Blois, issued in May, 1579, prohibited this. But as a matter of fact, the commoners assumed the names of the fiefs that belonged to them and thus gradually usurped the title of nobility.

Ever since the Middle Ages there had been a slow accession, on the part of the third estate, to the nobility. Mireur, in his "Tiers état à Draguignan" (The Third Estate at Draguignan), shows that of 25 enfeoffed families in this city, 18 came from the common people in 1789. Frequently the merchants, who were among the richest class of artisans, prepared their sons for judicial positions conferring nobility. Roupnel, in his interesting work "Populations du pays dijonnais" (The People of the Region of Dijon), shows clearly the unstable condition of the noble families.

The old military nobility, as well as the administrative nobility of the fifteenth century, disappeared to a large extent. They were replaced almost entirely by a new nobility, in great part of parliamentary origin. But most of the high magistrates came from families of rich merchants of Dijon, or from the towns of the province. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the barriers between the various social classes were much less absolute than at the time of Louis XIV. From the

seventeenth century on these classes tended to form closed castes.

THE "REFORMATION" OF THE NOBILITY

It is true that several times the royal power tried to take steps against the "usurpers" of nobility by instituting reforms. This was done in the sixteenth century and more frequently still in the seventeenth, particularly during the reign of Louis XIV. But these were mostly fiscal measures. There were stricken from the lists of the nobility all those who "derogated," that is, those who devoted themselves to commerce, although Colbert had in 1669 granted them the right to engage in maritime commerce without prejudice to their standing. Those too were excluded whom poverty prevented from asserting their claims and from paying the dues involved. The magistrates, who furnished most of the members of the committees of reform, were usually members of the parliaments. Especially in Brittany they proved very obliging toward their colleagues and very harsh toward the judges of the lower courts. During this time patents of nobility continued to be granted for a pecuniary consideration. The principal effect of the reforms was to make the nobility an idle class that could find only in the army an occupation compatible with its dignity. The chasm separating the nobility and the third estate

became ever greater. This conclusion is reached particularly in a recent searching study by Bourde de la Rogerie on the reform of the nobility in Brittany. At the end of the *ancien régime* d'Hozier, by his decisions on the quarters of the nobility, had at his mercy all those who aspired to military preferment.

In reality all men who acquired a notable fortune succeeded in getting into the ranks of the nobility, a privilege which conferred all sorts of advantages upon them, especially of a pecuniary nature. In 1776 Turgot was able to declare very justly that the "body of nobles," exempt from all dues imposed upon commoners, comprised "the whole body of the rich," and that "the case of the privileged has become the case of the rich against the poor." All these new nobles, as is always the case in such instances, were more insistent upon their rights and more spoiled by their titles of honor than the nobles of ancient lineage.

NUMBER OF NOBLES

After all we have said it may be seen how difficult it is to fix the number of the nobles during the *ancien régime*. The most reliable estimate is that of the abbot Coyer in his "Noblesse commerçante" (Commercial Nobility) of 1756; the Marquis de Bouillé, in his "Mémoires" also gives dependable figures. These sources state that there were 80,000 noble families comprising about 400,000 in-

dividuals. But no statistics are available, and it is impossible to determine an exact figure, as could be done in the case of the clergy.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE NOBILITY

These privileges were numerous and important. In the first place, the majority of the nobles were lords of fiefs and by virtue thereof, regardless of their financial condition, they enjoyed manorial privileges, the nature and character of which have already been described. Some lords, almost deprived of their immediate domain, possessed only the manorial dues as a means of livelihood, and hence they insisted upon them all the more strenuously.

With the manorial rights were connected the "honorary preëminences," such as the right of having a coat of arms, a lord's bench in the parish church, and special vaults or *enfeux*. These preeminences are more important than would ordinarily be expected. They led to many suits between lords and caused discontent among the parishioners. It is not surprising that during the time of the Revolution the agrarian troubles often began by the destruction of the lords' benches, their coats of arms, and their vanes.

More important still were the exemptions from obligations to the royal treasury which the nobility enjoyed. Nobles were exempt from the *taille*, from forced labor on the highways, from the billet-

ing of troops, etc. When the king, pressed by need of money, created new taxes, such as the capitation and the twentieth tax, which were supposed to affect all his subjects, we can understand the efforts of the nobles to secure exemption therefrom, or at least to pay them only in part. In fact, a special capitation roll was drawn up for the nobles; and, so far as the twentieth tax was concerned, the nobles did not pay it in proportion to their income, in spite of the verification of the rolls at the end of the *ancien régime*.

With regard to justice, the nobles were compelled to appear only before the bailiffs and seneschals, and when accused of a crime their cases were judged by the parliaments. When condemned to death, they had the privilege of escaping hanging. They could only be "decapitated."

Finally, as we know, the rich ecclesiastical benefices, the prelacies and also the high military positions were reserved to the nobles. In many noble families the younger sons were tonsured, and it was hoped that the benefices to be conferred upon them would remain in their possession, even if they should renounce the ecclesiastical career.

VARIOUS CATEGORIES AMONG THE NOBILITY. THOSE PRESENTED AT COURT

The nobility did not form a homogeneous class. There were privileged lords and others. In the

first place there were those who had been presented to the king and queen.

"The presentation of men," says Carré in his book "Noblesse de France et l'opinion publique au XVIII[e] siècle (The Nobility of France and Public Opinion in the Eighteenth Century), "consisted in hunting with the king, riding his horses and driving in his carriages." The woman "admitted in presentation" offered her cheeks to the king, the queen, the dauphin and the princes. Toward the end of the *ancien régime* there were 4000 families that had been presented, representing about 20,000 persons. A regulation of 1760 endeavored to limit the number by decreeing that in order to be presented the candidate must belong to a family tracing its ancestry back to the year 1400. But if this had been applied rigorously, more than one-third of the families admitted to court would have had to be excluded. Hence Louis XV personally decided in 1774 that only the king himself could determine who should be presented.

Indeed under Louis XVI there were more presentations than ever. Many provincial noblemen coveted this honor. Thus Chateaubriand was presented to Louis XVI in 1787. He gives a picturesque description of the scene in his "Mémoires d'Outre-tombe" (Memoirs from Beyond the Grave).

The presentation was not only an honor. It conferred considerable advantages, especially in the

army. It made it easy to intrigue for high military offices. With all the merit and efficiency in the world, one could not pass beyond the rank of colonel, unless one had been presented at court. Carré tells us the following:

"A lieutenant of infantry by the name of Montfalcon, although cited by the Marechal de Ségur, was given little or no preferment. He was made chevalier de Saint-Louis and major of a small garrison, but there he stopped because he had not been 'presented.' Then near Nîmes he discovered at the house of an aunt a bundle of documents proving that he was descended from the old family of Adhémar. He hurried to Paris, submitted his documents to Chérin, who declared them authentic. He was 'presented' and became colonel. Then, since he was polished and well-bred, and had the manners of a man of the world, he married a rich widow, a lady of honor of the Dauphiness, and presently he became a minister of Louis XVI at Brussels."

We see then that under Louis XVI there was a "rage" among the provincial noblemen to be presented. Chérin states this in so many words in his book "La noblesse considerée dans ses divers rapports" (The Nobility considered in its various Aspects), published in 1788. He says: "A nobleman is esteemed less by what he is worth than by the number of years of nobility that he can point to. . . . In certain classes of society it is the practise to receive only persons that have been presented and to bar absolutely all others, no matter how good or honorable they may be." Again in 1781 it was decided to admit as officers only such nobles

as could prove one hundred per cent nobility. Hence the increasing hostility of the provincial nobility against the court nobility can readily be explained.

THE COURT NOBILITY

The greatest privileges and most lucrative offices and pensions went to the court nobility.

In this class fortunes enjoying an income of between 100,000 and 150,000 livres were frequent, and many ran considerably higher. The Duke of Orleans, grandson of the Regent, had three millions in revenue in 1753. During the time of Louis XVI the house of Orleans, allied with that of Penthièvre, enjoyed an income of about eight millions. The income of the house of Condé during the eighteenth century is estimated at 1,500,000 livres, and that of the Conti at 600,000 livres. The Dukes of Bouillon and Mortemart had incomes of 500,000 livres. The Dukes of Chevreuse had 400,000; the Duke of Grammont, 300,000; the Duke of La Tremoille, 200,000; the Marquis of Villette, 150,000. The nobility of the robe also boasted of great fortunes. The family of Le Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau had an income of 600,000 livres; the presiding judge d'Aligre, it is said, had a fortune of six or seven millions. The families of Eprémesnil, Joly de Fleury, and Hérault de Séchelles were also very wealthy.

Moreover the families of the high nobility often refurbished their coats of arms by contracting alliances with families in the financial world. We cite the wealth of a Samuel Bernard (33 millions), a Bouret (42 millions), a Pâris de Montmartel (100 millions), a Lenormand de Tournehem (20 millions). Not only the daughters of financiers married nobles, but often the financiers were ennobled and thus founded noble families.

THE MODE OF LIFE AMONG THE HIGH NOBILITY

Many members of the high nobility led a very pompous, ruinous life. The memoirs of the time reveal the luxury in garments and robes, for the clothing of the men rivaled that of the women in costly ornaments. It is easy to imagine the value of garments made of silver or gold cloth and trimmed with Spanish lace. Ball robes frequently cost 1500 or 2000 livres. And the brides' trousseaux were very expensive. That of Mlle. de la Briffe, daughter of the first president of the parliament of Brittany, was estimated at more than 21,000 livres in 1781; that of Mlle. Billon, 45,000 in 1787; that of Mlle. de Mondragon, 100,000 in 1784.

The court nobility boasted of having the finest horses and the most elegant carriages, often upholstered in velvet and decorated with painted pan-

els. Luxury at table was particularly striven for by the magistrates and financiers. An army of servants was employed. It was nothing unusual to find in a nobleman's house from 30 to 40 men-servants, not to mention the chambermaids and stewards. Finally it was fashionable to support mistresses, who received sumptuous pensions, not to mention presents. The actor Fleury says:

"The prince of Soubise was not content to throw gold in the path of his queens of the boudoir—there were a dozen of them—; since he gave each one of them the same household, the same livery and an equipage of the same kind, people remarked when they saw the carriages of his mistresses passing: Here comes the family of Soubise!"

When the president de Rieux dismissed Camargo in 1743 he gave him a present of 120,000 livres.

The receptions in high society were no less expensive, regardless of whether they were given in conjunction with balls, dinners, theatrical performances or hunts. A supper to which the prince of Soubise invited the king at Saint-Ouen in 1749 cost no less than 200,000 livres. Choiseul, both at Paris and at his residence in Chanteloup, kept an open table. He received guests every evening and gave suppers and concerts. His mode of living was such that his income of 800,000 livres was hardly sufficient. At Chantilly, on the admirable estate of the Condé family, there were numerous splendid feasts.

Life in the château was indeed quite as expensive

as life at Paris. The splendors of the château of Sceaux, the residence of the Duchess of Chambord, of Maine, have often been described. It belonged to the Maréchal of Saxe. The château of Pontchartrain, where Maurepas held a veritable court, and that of Chanteloup were no less attractive. No less splendid was the château of Brienne, where the count of Brienne and his brother, the archbishop, gave sumptuous feasts. Henri Carré says:

"One reached the château of Brienne by a long avenue lined with lime-trees, lilacs and lawns. In the ground floor were the reception rooms, a dining room for eighty persons, a great salon overlooking the avenue and the gardens, a billiard room, a library with circular galleries, a museum of natural history, a laboratory for experimental physics, and a theatre that could be transformed into a ballroom by lowering the stage to the level of the floor. The ground floor contained also an apartment for the countess. In the basement below there was a ballroom for the servants. In front of the château, on the side of the court of honor, there were two large pavilions divided into separate compartments."

At Brunoy near Paris the financier Pâris de Montmartel expended 10 millions. At Méréville, in Beauce, the banker de la Borde spent 14 millions in order to make an English park.

In all these residences, as well as in the less pretentious country homes, there were endless feasts, theatrical performances and magnificent hunts. The Marquis de Mirabeau correctly states in his "Ami des hommes" (Friend of Men) that "by the

life that they lead in their châteaux the great lords ruin the peasants as well as themselves."

The richest of them were deeply in debt. When they died in 1740 and 1741 respectively, the Duke of Bourbon and the Prince of Carignan owed five millions each. About 1750 the Duke of Antin owed 900,000 livres. In 1785 Choiseul left debts to the amount of six millions. Some could not meet their obligations and aroused widespread attention by going into bankruptcy. Thus the prince of Guéméne became a bankrupt with liabilities amounting to 32 millions. Many Parisian judges, too, as for example the presiding judges de Mesmes and Maupeou, were ruined because of their desire to live the lives of great lords.

THE ROYAL PENSIONS

It is no wonder then that the high nobility sought to increase its revenues by begging for pensions. The princes of blood were the first to receive pensions. The Count of Toulouse, who had an income of 1,700,000 livres, drew 100,000 livres from the Treasury besides. The Prince of Condé, whose enormous fortune we have mentioned, received 260,000 livres per year from this source. The Duke of Chartres, son of the Duke of Orléans, drew a pension of 150,000 livres in 1747. Under the reign of Louis XVI, the Count of Artois and the Count of Provence received 37 and 29 mil-

lions, respectively, in order to pay their debts.

We pass over the rich pensions paid to former ministers. To a certain extent they may be regarded as remuneration for services rendered. But there was less justification for Mme. de Pompadour to have large pensions granted to the members of her family and to her friends, or for the king to grant rich endowments to the daughters of favorites at the time of their marriage. During the reign of Louis XV the Noailles secured pension after pension. The Marquise of Lambert, worth four millions, took a pension of 5000 livres in 1745. In the reign of Louis XVI the princess of Lamballe, the friend of Marie-Antoinette, received enormous sums in pensions and salaries.

The Polignac family proved more grasping still. In 1779 the count of Mercy wrote to the mother of the queen, the Empress Maria Theresa:

"For four years the Polignac family, without having rendered any service to the king and by favor pure and simple, has been receiving, in emoluments and other benefits, almost 500,000 livres per year. All the deserving families are protesting against the injustice of such a dispensation of favors. . . ."

Indeed the Polignac family secured 700,000 livres in pensions, not counting various gratuities.

When at the time of the Revolution the Red Book revealed the startling sum of pensions granted to the favorites of the court, the hatred against the *ancien régime* naturally increased, and cries of an-

ger arose against this useless aristocracy, against these parasites, for whose foolish extravagances the royal treasury had to pay.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE HIGH LIFE OF THE NOBILITY

The society life, favored by the ostentatiousness of the high aristocracy, led indirectly to the Revolution. Its effect was to bring the ancient nobility of the sword into close contact with the nobility of the lawyer's gown and the financial world. The presiding judge de Mesmes, and the judges Chauvelin and Le Pelletier, kept an open table, and the highest lords were present at their receptions. The presiding judge Hénault, married to the daughter of a financier, was the intimate of the Duchess of Maine, and associated with the families of Nivernais, Brancas and Maurepas. The family of Dufort de Cheverny—belonging to the nobility of the gown—had intercourse with persons of the highest nobility. The financial world also associated more and more with the ancient aristocracy. The receptions of the farmer general de la Popelinière, of Mme. d'Epinay, and of Grimod de la Reynière were well attended. The salons of the wealthy aristocracy brought together liberal-minded nobles and illustrious writers, the "philosophers," whose ideas exercised so great an influence upon French society during the eighteenth century. By their

manners and ideas a part of the high Parisian nobility were beginning to become *déclassé* at the very time when the social hierarchy seemed more absolute and more rigid than ever.

THE PROVINCIAL NOBILITY. DIVERSITY OF CONDITIONS

If we consider the nobility that had not been presented and that lived in the provinces, we find a great diversity of conditions. The extent and importance of the landed estates of these lords differed considerably. Let us take for example Brittany. Certain lords owned the greater part of a number of parishes there. Thus the barony of Sens, not far from Rennes, comprised not only the entire parish of Sens, but also the greater part of the parishes of Vieuxvy and Romazy. Similarly the manor of Martinière and Montbarot, the dependencies of which abounded in the entire region north of Rennes. Finally we mention the manor of Saint-Brice, which was formed by the fusion of seven or eight estates. In this way the estates of nobles were sometimes merged.

Medium-sized and small manors were infinitely more numerous than large ones. It was not unusual for a parish to contain several. The parishes of Tremblay and Beauce each comprised six; in Landéan there were seven; in Carentoir, fifteen. Apparently many of the manors were rather small,

with only two or three farm-houses. Some of them had only an immediate domain of about twenty hectares.

This is the reason why the economic condition of the noble proprietors varied infinitely. Let us consider the amount of income of various manors, still taking Brittany as an example. Sometimes it is rather high. The marquisate of Romilley and the barony of Tiercent each brought 42,000 livres income. The count of Villetehart had a revenue of 36,000 livres, while the marquis of Châteaugiron had 124,000 livres. But those manors of which the income was less than 10,000 livres were much more numerous. The manor of Launay-Quinart brought only 7500 livres, and that of Sion 5500 livres. Many others were worth not more than 4000 livres in income. Finally many small manors hardly produced 1000 livres, as for example that of Espinaye, the immediate domain of which contained only 60 *journaux* (less than 30 hectares), and which netted only 900 livres. Hence it is easy to see that there was a very numerous petty nobility in miserable circumstances. Perhaps this is more striking in Brittany than elsewhere, but everywhere there existed a poor nobility whose existence was very precarious.

Consequently living conditions varied infinitely among the nobility. This appears from the inventories after death. The personal property of the marquis of Châteaugiron was estimated at 112,-

828 livres in 1762, and the inventory describes the luxurious furnishings of this nobleman, both at Rennes and in the country. The furnishings of the château of Gage are valued only at 12,734 livres. They were comfortable but simple. On the other hand, the homes of the poor nobles were hardly better furnished than the homes of the peasants.

THE AVERAGE NOBILITY

There also lived in the French provinces a nobility in comfortable circumstances that continued to reside on its estates during a part of the year at least, but frequently possessed homes in the city, too. Many of these nobles led a social life which reminds one somewhat of life at court or in the salons of the Parisian nobles. During the winter there took place in the "capital" cities, such as Strasbourg, Dijon, Rennes, Poitiers, Bordeaux and Toulouse, brilliant receptions frequented by members of the parliaments, officers and high dignitaries. At Poitiers, says Henri Carré, "the nobility was passionately fond of reunions and festivals." Even in the small cities there were social events for the nobility, quite as lively and sumptuous as those in the large cities. During the warm season the pleasures of life in the château furnished the attraction. The members of the parliaments, who were often the most affluent among the provincial

nobility, were noted for the luxury of their receptions. It was customary to give sumptuous feasts. At the château of Thorigny, in Dauphiné, where the Lavalette family lived, almost 4000 pounds of food were consumed in three months.

Yet many of the well-situated nobles never left their estates and lived in the country all the year, devoting themselves especially to the hunt. In the second half of the eighteenth century certain nobles, prompted by the prevailing style, engaged in agriculture. This was true of the Marquis of Turbilly, on his domain at Volandry in Anjou. He cleared waste-lands, drained swamps, constructed roads and deservedly became president of the agricultural society at Paris. It was true also of the Duke of Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who applied his energy to developing the artificial meadow and new methods of agriculture. But it must be confessed that such noblemen were very rare. Almost all owners of landed estates paid no attention to agriculture or to the management of their estates, entrusting this to their stewards, as Arthur Young states several times. Their only occupation was their service, for a few years during their youth, as officers in the king's army.

THE POOR NOBILITY

But the poor nobility, it would seem, was more numerous than that in comfortable circumstances.

They lived wretchedly in manors that were falling into ruins. A nobleman of Brittany, the Count of Sensy, had an income of 1200 livres, with which he had to rear seven children. In 1774 a certain Colas de la Baronnais asked the king for assistance, for with his income of 2000 livres he had to bring up seventeen children. P. de Vaissière, in his book "Les gentilshommes campagnards de l'ancienne France" (The Country Gentlemen of Old France), gives many similar examples. He says that the misery of the country gentlemen was particularly great in sections where agriculture did not prove remunerative and where coöperative farming was practised. The noble proprietors suffered reverses as the result of bad crops and were hardly better off than the farmers themselves. One of these country gentlemen, de Couladère by name, who lived on his land near Montauban, petitioned the controller-general for assistance in 1710. The crop had failed and there was not enough grain for food or for the next sowing. He adds:

"Our baker refuses to furnish us with bread any more because we have no crops left. The millet that we have will not suffice to provide us for the year and to keep our farmers alive . . . Yet I consider myself fortunate to have this sort of bread, although I am not accustomed to eat it."

As for the education of the boys and provision for the girls, the ruined nobles depended entirely upon the generosity of the king.

It is not astonishing that many nobles were reduced to the condition of peasants or even looked for work on farms or in the excise service. Some even became carriers of sedan-chairs or muleteers. In 1713 the maréchal d'Harcourt, speaking of Normandy, wrote to the Secretary of War:

"I witness the poor nobility of this section in such a pitable state that noblemen become peasants because they do not possess the means for an education, not even for learning to read or write. This poverty obliges them to marry peasant girls, provided the latter possess at least an acre of arable land."

In 1789 seven noblemen dressed as peasants appeared before the provincial assembly of Poitou. They could not even pay their own expenses at the inn, and they confessed that their daughters worked in the farm-yard and herded the sheep in the fields.

Accordingly it is easy to understand the hostility felt by the poor, petty nobility toward the court nobility in 1789, for the latter garnered all the favors, the lucrative sinecures and the military positions. An echo of these complaints is found in the lines that Brissot published in 1790 in the "Patriote français":

"If any one class of citizens is the victim of the despotism and aristocracy of the great and rich . . . it is the poor nobility, that numerous class of gentlemen peasants bound by a hoary Gothic prejudice to their class. . . . The array of provocations of every kind to which they are subjected in military matters is one of the most revolting imaginable."

This situation of the petty nobility engaged the attention of many throughout the century. Certain writers—especially the abbot Coyer in his "Noblesse commerçante" and a gentleman of Brittany, Pinczon du Seldes Monts,[1] advocated industrial and commercial activity for the nobility. But the poor nobles had no means for this. In fact those nobles that took an interest in mining companies, either as grantees or stockholders, were mostly of the wealthy class, belonging to such families as Croy, Conti, Charost, Solages and Chaulnes.

THE NOBILITY AND THE PEASANTS

Although the nobles were obliged to lead a life so simple that they could hardly be distinguished from peasants, they did not by any means consider the latter as their equals. The relations between the lords and their peasants were far from having the idyllic character depicted by Mme. de la Rochejaquelein in her Memoirs. Even in Bocage in Vendée it is doubtful whether there was always perfect accord between the two classes. The poor nobles possessing manorial rights were naturally inspired to exercise them most rigorously in order to be able to live. Indeed, the court nobility, absent from their domains and in great need of money because of their luxurious mode of living, were no less exacting. During the course of the

[1] Author of *Considérations sur le commerce de Bretagne,* 1796.

eighteenth century the increased cost of living and the growing need for money certainly had the effect of aggravating the manorial exploitation, as we have seen. It was the period of the restoration of the court-rolls, the age in which the subinfeudation of barren lands multiplied, thus injuring the interests and needs of the mass of peasants. Not that the nobles were naturally tyrannical, but they were neither saints nor philanthropists and regarded the peasants as of a different class from themselves. In fact the serious agrarian troubles that broke out at the time of the Revolution, and the manner in which the peasants rose against the manorial system, prove clearly that the nobility did not by any means exercise that beneficent and paternal authority about which we are usually told.

THE NOBILITY AND THE NEW IDEAS

We may ask how far it is true that at the approach of the Revolution a goodly part of the nobility had been won over to the new ideas of liberty and equality, known as the "philosophical ideas." No doubt some of the members of the high nobility in Paris who associated with the writers and thinkers of the period and entertained them in their salons, were converted to the theories of humanity and justice. The following significant passage of the Count of Ségur is often quoted:

"We were scornful critics of the old customs, of the feudal pride of our fathers and of their severe etiquette, and everything that was old seemed annoying and ridiculous to us . . . We felt disposed to follow with enthusiasm the philosophical doctrines professed by witty and bold writers. Voltaire attracted our intellect and Rousseau touched our hearts. We took secret pleasure in seeing them attack the old framework, which appeared antiquated and ridiculous to us. . . . We enjoyed at the same time the advantages of the patriciate and the amenities of a plebeian philosophy."

But the philosophical ideas won adherents among the nobles only in a small minority of cases, although they were prominent in the masonic lodges. As a whole the nobles were more concerned about preserving the privileges of every kind that they enjoyed. The members of the parliaments repeatedly expressed, in their remonstrances, the ideas and sentiments of the class to which they belonged. If they combated what they styled the despotism and tyranny of the royal agents, and opposed the new taxes, it was above all because they felt their privileges endangered. Toward the end of the *ancien régime* they bore a grudge against the progressive ministers, such as Necker and Turgot, who tried to realize administrative and social reforms tending to diminish the inequalities. The nobility detested the provincial governors, who were the most active and powerful agents of a government whose tendencies the nobility distrusted. Their reason for invoking liberty was

because they feared the progress of an equality that was dangerous to their privileges.

This explains why the nobility demanded the States General, in which they hoped to achieve the triumph of their cause, and a constitution, which, they thought, would guarantee their privileges. According to Mounier, all the deputies of the nobility were "in agreement on the point that they had no constitution and that the States General should procure one for them." It should also be remembered that as a result of the edicts of May, 1788, against the Parliaments, the nobility gave the signal for the revolutionary agitation which was destined soon to turn against them.

THE NOBILITY AND PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion, moreover, did not at all believe in this liberalism of the nobility. As Henri Carré shows in his valuable book "La noblesse de France au XVIII[e] siècle" (The Nobility of France in the Eighteenth Century), opinion became more and more pronounced against the nobles. But, in spite of what the learned historian says, the discredit into which they had fallen was not brought about primarily by the moral decadence of a part of the class, which was too much addicted to gambling and to women, nor by the scandals provoked by the swindling or the violence of this or that nobleman. Rather were the nobles considered

more and more to be parasites, who were ruining the royal treasury, and privileged characters, who were harming the interests of the whole nation.

Even long before the Revolution the Marquis of Argenson in his "Pensées pour la réformation de l'État (Thoughts on the Reform of the State) declared that "the race of great lords must be destroyed completely":

> "By great lords I understand those who have dignities, property, titles, offices and functions, and who, without deserts and without necessarily being men at all, are none the less great and for this reason often worthless. . . . But they themselves and many others will tell you that they are the bulwark of the state and that the good names of Montmorency, La Trémoille, etc. must be preserved. I notice that a breed of good hunting dogs is preserved, but once it deteriorates it is done away with."

In fact all the social classes that are grouped under the name of third estate turned unanimously against the nobility. The peasants complained especially of the manorial system and its most glaring abuses. The bourgeoisie complained above all about the exemptions from taxes which the nobility enjoyed, and against their privileges in juridical matters. The claim was raised that the bourgeoisie ought to be admitted to a footing of equality and should be eligible to all positions in the service of the state. By its natural capacities and education the bourgeoisie claimed that it was best fitted for administering public affairs, for it knew

more about legislation than the lords. Then too its pride had been humiliated very often. It demanded also the abolition of the right of armorial bearings, all titles and decorations, and the discontinuance of the schools for the "education" of the children of poor nobles. Finally it called for equality of civil and penal laws for nobles and commoners. So strong were the feelings against the nobility animating the deputies of the third estate in the States General that the ambassador of the United States, Gouverneur Morris, wrote in 1789: "the current against the nobility is so strong that I fear its destruction."

LACK OF A CONSCIOUSNESS OF MUTUAL INTERESTS AMONG THE NOBILITY

But it was not the hostility of the entire third estate that constituted the greatest danger for the nobles. The most serious disadvantage was the lack of a feeling of solidarity among them. The petty provincial nobility detested the court nobility more than it did the third estate itself. And the privileged order was subdivided into a great number of distinct categories, separated by opposed interests. The nobles did not constitute a social class with a consciousness of collective interests. They formed an incoherent mass of privileged persons, who were concerned primarily about their family interests, that is, their personal interests. Even

when they had public authority at their disposal they did not always succeed in using it effectively. Brittany presents a case in point. In the States of this province the nobility enjoyed a preponderant rôle. They were concerned about defending their interests against the royal government. If they had joined forces with the parliament, composed exclusively of nobles, they would have become formidable. But they did so only in rare instances. The Parliament, for its part, thought only about its own private interests. It was animated above all by an *esprit de corps* and often got into conflict with the States. In this way the agents of the royal power profited by the disunion and triumphed over two separate adversaries, who if united could frequently have won a victory. An illuminating treatment of this subject is given by Rebillon in "Les États de Bretagne au XVIII[e] siècle" (The States of Brittany in the Eighteenth Century).

The superiority of the adversaries of the nobility, namely the members of the various classes composing the third estate, lay in their feeling that they had a common cause against the privileged class. In this sense the third estate truly represented the French people. That explains why the nobility, in spite of its ancient privileges, its wealth and the support of the royal court, succumbed forever in the struggle that began in 1789.

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Chapter V

Parliamentary Nobility and Administrative Nobility

A characteristic feature of society in the eighteenth century was the existence of a parliamentary nobility and an administrative nobility, a phenomenon that is in a sense analogous to the Russian *Tchin*. In old France, as in Russia, the position brought nobility with it, but in France the judges and officials joined the ranks of the nobility only very slowly.

ORIGINS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY NOBILITY

In the seventeenth century the judges of the sovereign courts and parliaments still held a position half-way between the bourgeoisie and the nobility. In the eighteenth century there was a complete fusion between the nobility of the sword (*noblesse d'épée*) and that of the gown (*noblesse de robe*); especially in the parliaments of Rennes, Rouen and Grenoble, which decided to admit as members only full-fledged nobles.

Roupnel, in the work that we have already quoted, shows by significant examples how the parliamentary families secured great lordly estates,

which assured them a high social position. The family of Bouhier in Burgundy acquired numerous estates in the region around the Burgundian capital between 1631 and 1730, bought up public property, and restored to force the old manorial rights of the domain of Lantenay, so that during the eighteenth century their lands constituted "one of the finest groups of manorial possessions in the province." The family of Minot de Mairetet, descendants of a merchant of the sixteenth century, after a slow ascension to the nobility, gradually acquired a large domain and in the eighteenth century became a powerful parliamentary family in Dijon.

GREAT PARLIAMENTARY FAMILIES

It is easy to understand why the great parliamentary families, such as those of d'Ormesson, Joly de Fleury, Lepelletier, Molé, d'Aguesseau, Séguier, Pasquier and Malesherbes, should sometimes eclipse the nobility of the sword. The presiding judge d'Aligre had an income of 700,000 livres. When the public offices depreciated more and more in the course of the eighteenth century, the wealthy bourgeois no longer sought them, and the parliamentary nobility became a closed caste.

They allied themselves with the nobility of the sword, although they could be frequently distinguished by manners and customs. They were stiffer if not more austere, and their luxury was

often more costly but also more temperate. They still showed traces of their bourgeois origin.

PERSONAL MERIT OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

It is difficult to pass judgment on the personal worth of these members of the parliaments. Often the members of the courts exercised their functions at an age when they possessed neither the necessary education nor experience. In the universities they had often acquired, for money, diplomas that did not by any means prove that they had studied law. The investigation made by the corporation had no real value. Many of the parliamentarians were quite ignorant or incompetent. But in the courts of justice there were also a certain number of deserving men and even some of great distinction, such as La Chalotais. There were also scholars, like Bouhier, distinguished writers, such as the presiding judge Hénault and the presiding judge de Brosses, and a chemist of renown, Guyton de Morveau.

CONSERVATIVE SPIRIT OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

However that may be, the members of the parliaments claimed to adhere to the old customs. They frowned upon the diminution of the cost of justice, the abolition of the judges' fees and the unification of practises. They did not wish to

change the ancient criminal procedure, which was so unjust and involved so many errors of justice, and they adhered to the barbaric system of torture. Not until the eve of the Revolution (1780–1788) were the forms of torture known as *question préalable* and *question préliminaire* abolished.

The parliamentarians protested vigorously against the *lettres de cachet*, which they regarded as an encroachment upon their judicial prerogatives. But they disapproved of the freedom of the press and condemned and burned a multitude of books because they were irreverent toward the religious truths or the existing institutions. They opposed the declaration granting civil status to the Protestants.

Finally the parliamentarians appointed themselves the defenders of all the social privileges and turned against all the reforms that tended to diminish them. Turgot had no greater enemies than them when he tried to abolish compulsory labor in kind or the wardenships of trade-corporations. It is known that they condemned Boncerf's book denouncing the manorial rights, and it is possible that their sruggle against the royal power had its source in their conservative spirit. "Royal despotism" concerned them particularly when liberal ministers tried to ameliorate existing conditions.

Hence the hostility of the "philosophers" and all liberal spirits toward the parliaments can be

readily understood, and the invectives of Diderot and Voltaire are easy to explain. The former says:

"Intolerant, bigoted and stupid, preserving the customs of the Goths and Vandals, . . . they are eager to interfere in everything, religion, government, police protection, finance, art and sciences, and always confuse everything in accordance with their ignorance, interest and prejudices."

Voltaire distinguished himself even more by his hatred against the parliaments. He deplored their summoning (*rappel*) in 1774: "It is worthy of our nation of apes to regard our assassins as our protectors. We are flies who take the part of spiders."

However, among the members of the parliaments there were also liberal and generous spirits, as du Paty, liberals such as Robert de Saint-Vincent, and even radicals, namely the "American faction," including Adrien Duport and Hérault de Séchelles. They are the men who contributed to the prestige of the parliament. Thanks to them, it has been possible to consider that body as a defender of liberty.

THE SOCIAL RÔLE OF THE PARLIAMENTS

The parliaments represented the past rather than the future, yet it cannot be denied that they played a great social rôle during the eighteenth century. In the cities serving as court residences their members held the first rank by virtue of their wealth

and influence. The whole body of lawyers, advocates and attorneys centered in them. Cities like Rennes, Dijon and Aix have preserved their sumptuous homes. In the neighboring rural regions the most beautiful châteaux belonged to them. Among them were powerful lords and landed proprietors, as in Brittany the families of Caradeuc, Châteaugiron and Talhouet, and in Dauphiné those of Ornacieux and Bérulle. The parliamentary cities present one of the interesting aspects of the France of those days.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE NOBILITY. THE PROVINCIAL "INTENDANTS." THE COUNCILLORS OF STATE

The high dignitaries, the members of the council of state and the provincial governors, or "intendants," also formed a genuine caste. So far as the provincial "intendants" are concerned, we need not here insist upon the importance and extent of their duties, which even increased during the eighteenth century and which they frequently carried out with zeal and intelligence. But we must emphasize their important social rôle. Often they formed veritable dynasties, as for instance the families of Amelot, La Galaisière, La Bourdonnaye de Blossac and Feydeau, and they kept in close touch with the parliamentary circles, to which they often belonged. Their salaries were high, varying from 20,000 to 40,000 livres. Some, like

Montyon and Blossac, had a large personal fortune. This social station helped to increase their independence as administrators. They did not blindly follow the orders of ministers; often they gave proof of initiative, as Turgot did in Limousin. To an increasing extent, toward the end of the *ancien régime,* they dealt with economic questions, and often happily. If they were unpopular, it was due to the fact that they showed themselves hostile to experiments in self-government, especially to the institution of the provincial assemblies. They came to be looked upon as the principal agents of "despotism."

The "intendants" kept in close touch with the council of state, in which they had begun their career as maître des requêtes and in which they were "erstwhile commissioners" (commissaires départis). The council of state formed the core of the administrative nobility, as it were. From it came most of the high officials, the assistants of the ministers of state, and often the ministers themselves.

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Chapter VI

Petty Industry. The Trades and Guilds

PREDOMINANCE OF PETTY INDUSTRY

In the eighteenth century, in spite of the economic changes foreshadowing the development of great industry (which will be discussed later), petty industry, that is, enterprises on a small scale, remained predominant. This is true not only of all the trades having as their object the feeding, clothing and housing of the population, but also the trades connected with the textile industry, all of which were later included among the great industries. As will be seen, "concentrated" enterprises remained the exception, even at the end of the *ancien régime*. In Poitou, a factory inspector wrote in 1747: "there are five hundred factories, but most of the manufacturers work for themselves, with the result that there are not more than fifty employers who have all their work done by hired help." Thirty years later these conditions had not changed in that province.

Everywhere in France the tanneries, glass-works and paper-mills, with the exception of a few large establishments, as well as the dyeing establishments

and laundries, were small concerns that employed only a few workmen. In most of the cities the small artisans who worked alone or employed but a single assistant were in the majority. In Bordeaux the number of assistants was only four times as great as that of the employers. Although a few textile factories at Paris employed, in 1791, several hundred workmen, the average was only sixteen employees to one employer. In the cities of second or third class, such as Rennes, large industrial undertakings were even less common.

THE GUILDS. FREE TRADES AND TRADE-CORPORATIONS

First of all we must consider the trades. Distinction should be made between the free trades and trade-corporations.

In spite of the efforts of the royal power and the edict of 1673, which renewed the edicts of 1581 and 1597, the free trades had not all been transformed into trade-corporations. They were still very numerous, more numerous on the whole than the others. Even when they aspired to this transformation, they met the opposition of the existing trade-corporations or of the municipal authorities, who invoked public interest.

The transformation of the free trades into trade-corporations had the following effects. It determined the rules of apprenticeship; it made a

trial-piece necessary; it determined the relations among the employers; and it created jurors. The free trades too had their regulations, but they were less rigid than the statutes, and their application was controlled, not by jurors of the trade, but by authority of the municipality or the lord.

APPRENTICESHIP

In the free trades the duration of the period of apprenticeship was not fixed, and the number of apprentices was not limited. In the sworn trades, on the other hand, the contract of apprenticeship was obligatory and its duration was determined by statutes, varying in general from four to eight years. The respective rights and duties of master and apprentice were fixed. The apprentice had to pay board for his maintenance, and he bound himself not to desert his master. The master, on his part, had to teach the apprentice his trade "without concealing anything from him," give him suitable lodging and board, and treat him decently. The number of apprentices was limited by statute, usually to one or two. It was hoped in that way to prevent any master from taking advantage of his colleagues, and the journeymen observed the same rule, for they feared the competition of the apprentices.

But it is clear that during the eighteenth century, as well as earlier, the apprentices were not

fully assured the enjoyment of those guarantees which the corporate statutes and the contracts of apprenticeship professed to assure them. Often they were compelled to do excessive labor, they were used as servants, and they had to endure the brutality of their masters and of the journeymen, although the public authorities tried hard to protect them.

THE JOURNEYMEN

Two conditions were necessary for becoming a journeyman: the candidate must have been an apprentice, and he had to pay a fee of admission. The masters wanted to reserve for themselves the right of taking on their workmen. They feared that the journeymen might arrogate this privilege to themselves, as was the case in the trades of the "tour de France," that is the itinerant trades.

The journeyman was hired to his master by a contract, which was often verbal but which he was compelled to respect in any case. Discipline was often harsh; the workman had to finish the task he began and could not leave his master without giving two weeks' notice.

In short, the masters enjoyed a sort of monopoly of labor. But it was forbidden a master to entice journeymen away from a colleague. The workmen in turn were not permitted to work on their own account. Those who did so were called

chambrelans and were ferreted out, as it were, by the guilds.

In the eighteenth century, more so than in previous ages, it was impossible for the majority of journeymen to rise above their station. It was due mainly to the legal organization of the trades that they were doomed to remain journeymen all their lives.

ACQUISITION OF THE STATUS OF MASTER

It became increasingly difficult to rise to the status of master. The trial-piece, absolutely obligatory, became more and more complicated and took a long time to complete, hence it became very onerous, in spite of the rules fixed by the royal ordinances. In addition it was necessary to give presents to the masters whose duty it was to judge the work.

Furthermore the aspirant had to pay fees to the sworn masters and give the guild a royalty, which was often very high and increased during the eighteenth century. Among the apothecaries at Paris it rose to 1000 livres, and among the keepers of cafés and the distillers it amounted to 800 livres. Then the municipal, aristocratic and royal authorities also demanded exorbitant dues. Finally there were demands and abuses on the part of the jurors, who took sums of money unjustly from the candidates.

On the other hand, the sons and sons-in-law of

masters were sometimes almost completely excused from the trial-piece or had to produce only a semi-trial-piece. The fees, too, which were exacted of them were reduced to a minimum. Thus mastership tended to become almost entirely a family monopoly.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE GUILDS. THE JURORS

The guilds met at stated periods, formed electoral assemblies every year and held business meetings about once a month. Yet these assemblies were not very independent, for the public authorities determined their agenda.

But the administration of the guilds was in the hands of the jurors, four or two in number, who were elected every two years by the masters. Their duties were very complex. They supervised law and order in their trade, controlled production, examining the quality of the products, verifying their weight, inspecting the measures and instruments, and marking the products that seemed to them honestly made. They were also responsible for the material interests and the finances of the guild. They proved very active but often were responsible for abuses.

THE BROTHERHOOD

Beside the guild there was the brotherhood, which was often confused with it, but had an exclusively

religious and charitable character. The brotherhood had its chapel and altar, where masses were read on the day of the patron saint and during the great festivals of the year. It also celebrated the obsequies of its members. The brotherhood, too, gave aid to brothers in need, to widows and orphans, and sometimes even to journeymen. But it was interested much less in the latter. The journeymen often formed separate brotherhoods, associations or journeyman-brotherhoods, which made it possible for them to help one another and take a stand against the masters. We will discuss this in detail later.

THE REAL RÔLE OF THE GUILDS

They aimed to maintain the collective monopoly of the masters of the same trade. They tried also to diminish the effects of competition, forbidding masters to have more than one shop, opposing the monopolies and endeavoring to assure to all the necessary raw material. Each of the trades formed a closed body, in opposition to the rest of the guilds. Each tried to maintain its privileges and monopoly and to defend itself against the encroachments of a neighboring guild, but at the same time to encroach upon others. Hence there were interminable lawsuits everywhere—between shoemakers and cobblers, and between tailors and old clothes dealers. The haberdashers were always in conflict

with all sorts of other guilds, precisely because they claimed the right to sell all kinds of goods. The clothes merchants tried constantly to defend themselves against the competition of the haberdashers, wholesale clothiers, tailors and jewelers, who did not hesitate to sell clothing to their customers. This is seen clearly at Nantes during the entire course of the eighteenth century.

The guilds combated also the strangers, that is, the itinerant dealers. At Rennes, for example, the guilds of merchants tried to compel them to sell only at wholesale.

Moreover, beside those merchants who were organized in trade-corporations, we find numerous petty merchants who evaded the supervision of the guilds, and also great wholesale merchants who found it easier to maintain their independence, especially in the great commercial centers. These merchants were often in conflict with the guilds of artisans, for example at Nantes with the nail-makers, who tried to forbid the importation of foreign nails. The merchants declared that the latter, in agreement with the iron manufacturers, were engaging in questionable practises.

LEGAL HIERARCHY OF THE TRADES

Often we find among the trades a legal hierarchy which usually developed from an economic hierarchy, for certain trades naturally led to opulence

and even to great wealth. Thus the municipal ordinance of Dijon, of January, 1727, divided the trades into four classes.

First class: the printers, book dealers, surgeons, apothecaries, haberdashers, clothiers, goldsmiths, hardware dealers, card makers and button makers.

Second class: the trades concerned with food supplies (bakers, butchers, pastry cooks, pork butchers, cooks, and wine merchants), the trades concerned with saddlery and hides, the shoemakers, and the upholsterers.

Third class: the trades concerned with metals and furniture.

Fourth class: the building trades, the cobblers, and the artisans giving out work (clothiers, agriculturists, etc.).

At Paris there rose above the other guilds the so-called "Six Bodies" (clothiers, grocers, haberdashers, furriers, hat makers and goldsmiths), which exercised an increasing preponderance over the other trades.

ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE SYSTEM OF TRADE-CORPORATIONS

No doubt supervision and regulation tended to prevent poor work and to produce products of good quality. Yet on the other hand, numerous frauds and many cases of negligence occurred, which were harmful to the public and which competition per-

haps might have prevented. The organization of the trades favored also the spirit of routine and hostility against every innovation.

While the *esprit de corps* sometimes engendered moral dignity and accentuated the spirit of responsibility, yet the corporative organization caused futile disputes about precedence and distrust among the guilds. The tanner distrusted the currier, the serge maker the card maker, and the apothecary the grocer. The organization was democratic in a sense, in that it tended to establish equality between the masters, an equality in mediocrity; but it had also an aristocratic character, since it tended to transform the guilds into closed bodies, inaccessible to the journeymen. The guild was not in any sense a family association in which masters and journeymen lived side by side in perfect harmony. It defended only the interests of the masters, and it is a serious mistake to compare the guilds of the *ancien régime* with the modern trades unions. Finally the organization of labor represented by the trade-corporation grew more and more out of harmony with the economic needs of the period.

ACCENTUATION OF GUILD ORGANIZATION

All the characteristics which we have described were accentuated more and more in the course of the eighteenth century. The royal power con-

tributed to this when by its decree of August 23, 1767, renewing the edict of 1673, it tried once more to submit all the trades to the supervision of the wardens of the trade-corporations. It favored also the reform and revision of the statutes demanded by the guilds, in order to make the rules and the monopoly stricter, and for the purpose of preventing competition. The royal power was interested in this, for it secured extra taxes in consequence of each of these reforms. Then too the royal authority, as a result, exercised a closer supervision over the guilds, particularly in matters of finance.

The spirit of routine in the guilds was increased. They were hostile to every innovation. In 1736 the button makers tried to oppose the manufacture of trade-buttons. In 1756 the king had authorized Bedel to apply to cotton materials a sort of blue dye, which he had invented. He established his industry, but in 1763 the great dyers sued him. A Paris hatter, Leprevost, manufactured hats made partly of silk; as a result his colleagues persecuted him continually. In 1760 the sworn masters seized a great number of his hats, and it took him four years to obtain authorization to continue his business. Thus, at the very time when the requirements of production were increasing, the trades guilds formed an obstacle in the path of industrial progress.

FINANCIAL RUIN OF THE GUILDS

The guilds were exposed to financial difficulties that became ever more serious. The basic reason for this is clear: the increasing needs of the royal treasury, aggravated by the wars of Louis XV.

This explains why, under the reign of Louis XIV, offices were created for the sake of collecting lucrative licence fees. In 1745 inspectors and controllers of the sworn masters were appointed, for the sake of collecting licence fees for them. But as a matter of fact, these fees were difficult to collect. The guilds of Rennes, for instance, could not raise the 194,000 livres demanded of them, for they had been ruined previously by the fees collected at the beginning of the century. In Roussillon the "intendant" declared that it was impossible to raise the requisite sums, "even if we should deprive the members of all their effects and all the furniture that they might have in their houses."

The royal power created also letters of mastership, but to a much smaller extent than in the seventeenth century. In 1757 the king had promised to grant no more such letters, but in 1767, when he was in need of funds, he created twelve masterships for each trade in Paris; eight in the cities having a superior court; four in those endowed with a presidial; and two in each of the others. The guilds were now so heavily in debt that frequently they did not procure licences for

new masterships. Finally we must mention the more or less voluntary gifts, such as the 514 thousand livres presented by the Six Bodies of Paris in 1759, after the defeat at Rossbach.

The guilds were always embarrassed by their old debts, by the lawsuits that they were involved in, and by their administrative expenses. Loans increased the annual expenditures, and it became necessary to contract loan after loan in order to pay the interest on the old debts. There came a time when the guilds saw no other escape but recourse to so-called *égails,* contributions assessed against the members, and initiation fees. The ruin of the guilds reflected also upon their members, whose economic condition became increasingly bad. Examples of this decline can be well seen in Roussillon and Rennes. Hence, after 1750 the government took up the question of the liquidation of the debts of the guilds, and it was this question which called forth the first projects of reform.

THE PROJECTS OF REFORM

Numerous memorials, especially after 1750, demanded the restriction of the corporative monopolies or even a system of complete freedom. In 1761 the Secretary of State Bertin demanded the reduction of the number of guilds by combining some of them.

Taking advantage of the accession of Turgot to

power, the economists engaged in an active campaign. In 1775 they published a memorial of Bigot de Sainte-Croix entitled "Essai sur la liberté du commerce et de l'industrie" (Essay on the Freedom of Commerce and Industry), which revealed clearly all the defects of the guild system and demanded the complete freedom of commerce and industry. The Six Bodies in reply had Delacroix draw up a long memorial, which endeavored to show that the conservation of the ancient privileges constituted a guarantee for the public.

THE REFORM OF TURGOT

The edict of 1776 was a logical consequence of the trend of ideas at the time. In his preamble Turgot tried to show the disastrous effects of the guild system upon industry, the workmen and the consumers. With the royal rights he contrasted the natural rights and claimed that one could not sell the right to work, for this was "the birthright of every man," and this birthright "the first, the most sacred and the most indefeasable of all." Consequently "it will be free to every person, of whatever condition and quality he may be," to exercise any kind of trade and even "to combine several." Lawsuits, as well as cases of poor work, should be judged by the constituted officers of surveillance. The masters and workmen are forbidden "to form any association or assembly under any

pretext whatsoever." Brotherhoods were likewise prohibited.

But the edict met with very lively opposition and was not applied. It fell with Turgot. Yet the old system was not reëstablished, as the new edict of August, 1776, which was a sort of compromise, shows. According to this, certain professions were to be free and others would be organized into guilds, but similar guilds would be united into a single one. The edict of August concerned only Paris, but the effort was made to extend its provisions also to the provinces—a slow and difficult task. In French Flanders, Artois and Brittany the old organization was maintained.

Summing up, we may say that in spite of certain improvements in the system, the question of the guilds was still a burning one when the Revolution broke out. In 1789 many of the memorials urged their abolition. These memorials reflected the feelings of the high bourgeoisie, the free professions and the merchants. On the other hand, the masters of the trades demanded their retention. Thus the struggle of the classes, the nature of which will be seen later, developed. The Constituent Assembly finally took up once more the radical measure of Turgot.

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Chapter VII

Commercial Development in the Eighteenth Century

The progress of commerce preceded and determined the progress of industry. But during the eighteenth century a remarkable commercial development, both internal and external, made itself felt.

THE WAYS OF COMMUNICATION

The various sections of France tended to emerge from their isolation, and the need for more active relations and less primitive communication was felt.

The network of roads developed appreciably, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century. Two facts contributed to this progress, first the establishment of the school for bridge and road engineers in 1747, and the organization of the engineers between 1750 and 1754. The budget for bridges and roads also increased greatly, rising at the end of the *ancien régime* to 7 million livres. Moreover this served only for bridges, tunnels and salaries, since the work of construction and maintenance of the roads was done by means of the

forced-labor statute (*corvée royale*). In 1788 there were 12,000 leagues of actually constructed roads and 12,000 leagues planned or in course of construction. The great roads, that is the royal roads, 12 to 20 meters wide, radiated generally from Paris toward the extremities of the kingdom. This was a natural consequence of centralization. The network resembled, in its general plan, our present-day network of railways, the important lines being Paris-Strasbourg, Paris-Lyons-Marseilles, Paris-Brest, Paris-Toulouse, and Paris-Lille. From east to west they were much less numerous. It is clear that in laying out this network, much more attention was paid to strategic, rather than commerical interests. In Brittany, at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, the Duke of Aiguillon, for example, prompted by military motives, actively pushed the construction of the great roads—a thing which displeased the estates of the province.

Nor should we forget that these roads were in rather poor condition. The stone surface, which forced labor was expected to provide, was in bad shape, and often the roads were obstructed by quagmires, while bridges were scarce. And since everywhere the cross-roads were impracticable, all the parish memorials complained about them.

Internal navigation was still more important for commerce than the roads. Particularly after 1770 the state devoted itself to navigation, regarded it as

a public utility and revived the projects abandoned after Colbert. Less attention was paid to the navigability of rivers, which was in a backward state and was impeded by the mills and the toll-houses, than to the building of canals. In the north especially this work made progress; a whole network of canals was built. But the Central Canal, the Burgundy Canal, and the Rhône-Rhine Canal were only begun. A memorial of the "contractors engaged in the conveyance of salt for the salt-store," dated 1785, declared, not without exaggeration, that because of all the obstacles in the way of navigation, the "conveyance" of merchandise by water was more expensive than shipment by land.

THE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

In spite of genuine progress, they were still imperfect. There were the stage-coaches, leased to the revenue farmers until 1775, entrusted with the transportation of passengers. The public carriages were still far from comfortable, especially the *fourgons* and the *carrosses*. The *diligences* were better equipped. As for the post-chaises, they traveled faster but were quite expensive. On the streams the barges left only three times a month, and their trips were endless. Thus it took from 18 to 20 days to travel in them from Paris to Rouen. On the roads, the *diligences* covered only two leagues per hour, and the *carosses* from eight to ten

leagues per day. To be sure, Turgot established *diligences* everywhere. But the trips were always infrequent, only one or two per week in Brittany. Then there were very few cross-country lines, and the price was very high—13 sous, and 7 sous per league in the *diligences*.

If we consider now the duration of the trips, we find that during the first sixty years of the eighteenth century they were very long. But toward the end of the *ancien régime* there was considerable improvement in this respect. It was due in part to the efforts of Turgot, who tried to better the service of the *diligences* and the stage-coaches by releasing them from the postal lease and giving them a grantee manager. But this reform was only transitory, as were the new conveyances called *turgotines*. Yet beginning with 1776 travel in the *diligences* became more rapid. From Paris to Lyons it now took hardly more than 5 days, while in the seventeenth century it took 10; to Bordeaux 6; to Lille 3 (in the seventeenth 4); to Marseilles 11. The post-chaises were more rapid, but one had to be rich in order to be able to afford them.

The mail service was of course very defective, particularly from one provincial town to another. There were in fact very few cross-country lines. From Lyons to Bordeaux letters had to travel via Paris and took eight days. From Rennes to Granville they took 7.

The transportation of merchandise, except for

packages of less than 50 pounds, was entrusted to draymen, who made a business of such work. It was very slow and expensive, the cost of transportation often being as high as the cost of the article itself. By water the prices were at least cut in half, but the boatmen were likely to practise fraud, or even to commit theft, and navigation was hindered by the tolls, mills, etc. But traffic became more active during the course of the century, as is seen by the fact that from 1,222,000 livres in 1676, the postal lease rose to 8,800,000 livres in 1777. The difficulties of transportation on the roads and rivers explain the fact that recourse was had, even more than in our day, to coastwise trade in all seacoast provinces. A ship-owner of Saint-Malo, Magon de la Balue by name, declares in one of his letters that from his city the shipment of merchandise by sea to Nantes was less expensive than land shipments to Rennes. Seaports were much more numerous than they are today; frequently barks of from 50 to 100 tons were used to ship goods from Brittany to Bordeaux or Bayonne, and from Havre to Granville.

In 1783 for the first time royal liners were introduced into service between the mother country and the Antilles. They were reserved for passengers, letters and objects of value, and left once a month for the "American islands," neither from Havre or Bordeaux. They left eight times a year from Havre for the United States, and four times

for Bourbon and the Îsle de France. This signified a great innovation.

Hence we may conclude that in the eighteenth century considerable progress was made with regard to ways of communication and transportation. But if we consider the revolution in this field that took place in the following century, we realize that in thirty years—from 1840 to 1870—the progress was infinitely greater than during the entire three centuries that had preceded.

DECLINE OF THE FAIRS. PROGRESS OF CREDIT

A very significant indication of the commercial development is furnished by the decline of the great fairs, not only those at Paris (Saint Germain and Lendit), but also those at Lyons. Only those at Beaucaire continued to do big business, but they lost much of their international character. Yet the provincial fairs continued to play an important part. Those of Caën and Guibray (in Normandy) attracted merchants from almost every part of France.

With regard to private credit there do not seem to have been any important changes. The failure of the Law system prompted the abandonment of all plans looking toward the establishment of a great bank, similar to those at London and Amsterdam. The banks at Lyons no longer had the importance that they once had. In spite of its active commerce, Marseilles possessed no important bank and

had to resort to commercial brokers. But in Paris the banks seem to have increased in number and importance; besides the private financiers engaged in banking operations everywhere. Toward the end of the *ancien régime* the necessity of establishing credit institutions made itself felt, an example being the *Caisse d'escompte*, established by Turgot in 1776 with a capital of 15 million livres, later increased to 100 million. But, so far as credit was concerned, France was much weaker than Holland and England.

THE LIBERAL TENDENCIES OF COMMERCIAL POLICIES. THE COMMERCIAL TREATIES

French commerce was favored by the activity of the administrators constituting the *Conseil de commerce*, and especially by the liberal tendencies which, in the second half of the eighteenth century, manifested themselves in commercial policies. This was in great part the work of economists such as Vincent de Gournay ("intendant du commerce" from 1750 to 1758), and his followers, such as the Trudaines; it was also the work of the physiocratic school, established by Quesnay, who opposed the mercantile theory and claimed that there existed between the various nations a genuine economic solidarity. Turgot and Condillac were interested in the freedom of trade even more than the followers of Quesnay.

The new ideas were first applied particularly to the question of grain, since the grain trade was carefully regulated. In 1763 the royal power authorized the free transportation of grain from one province to another, and in 1764 the free exportation of grain outside of the kingdom was authorized. Although a reaction took place in 1769, Turgot in 1774 established free trade in grain, and after the partial reaction which followed his fall, the declaration of June 17, 1787, established free circulation within the kingdom and foreign exportation.

There was also a tendency in favor of the abolition of the excessive and prohibitive customs duties, and the desire to conclude treaties of commerce with foreign powers made itself felt. The effort to negotiate with Spain failed, but in 1778 a treaty of alliance, as well as a commercial treaty, was signed with the new United States, containing the "most favored nation" clause. But the commercial relations between France and the new American republic were not very active before the Revolution. The Americans continued to trade primarily with England.

More important still was the commercial treaty concluded with England in 1786. It put an end to the commercial war, which had extended over an entire century, for the commercial treaty of Utrecht had not been carried out. Only an active system of contraband relieved the prohibitive

tariffs. The treaty of 1786 renewed almost all the stipulations of 1713, declared that the wines of France would not pay higher duty than the wines of Portugal, and the cambrics and lawns not more than the cloths of Holland, and placed upon cotton goods and most other cloths an ad valorem duty of 12 per cent. But it made no stipulation with regard to silks, which was very detrimental to the French industry. In a general way the treaty was much more advantageous for England than it was for France, in view of the superiority of English industry, brought about by the progress of machinery. The treaty of 1786 caused a very grave industrial crisis in France, affecting especially cotton cloths, crockery, hardware and hides. It is therefore not surprising that during the Revolution a very lively reaction was manifested against the liberal policy in vogue at the end of the *ancien régime*.

COMMERCE WITH EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

We find real progress in the commercial relations between France and the other European countries.

With regard to Spain, to be sure, the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a relative decline of commerce, in spite of the political *rapprochement* of 1761. An order of the king of Spain in 1779 even closed the Spanish market to

certain French products. Nevertheless the trade in cloths still constituted an important part of the French relations with Spain, and in 1789 the exports rose to 66 million. The relations with Holland were no longer as important as they had been in the seventeenth century. The treaty of 1786 with England brought about a remarkable improvement in the commercial relations of that country and France. French trade with Italy developed continually, as did also that with the Hanseatic cities, Russia and the Scandinavian countries. Germany received many manufactured products from France.

TRADE WITH THE LEVANT

This had always been considerable and did not decline, as has been claimed. But it did not preserve the relative importance that it had enjoyed in the seventeenth century, a fact explained by the development of trade with the Antilles. Marseilles, a free port, retained the monopoly on the trade with the Levant. France always had control of this trade, being favored by its friendly relations with Turkey. While the trade of the Levant with Holland, England and Venice declined, France on the eve of the Revolution imported merchandise to the value of 37 millions from the Levant and exported 28 millions thither, devoting 500 or 600

vessels to that trade. The French demand for silk, and especially cotton for manufacturing purposes, and oil and skins for the soap factories and tanneries of Marseilles grew continually. On the other hand, the exportation of cloth from Languedoc, which was very considerable up to 1773, decreased during the last years of the *ancien régime*.

THE GREAT MARITIME AND COLONIAL COMMERCE. THE INDIES COMPANY

The system of privileged commercial companies was not abandoned. But Law had amalgamated them all into the Indies Company, which, after the failure of the system, was reëstablished in 1725. The Indies Company was instrumental in extending the colonial domain of France. It exploited Louisiana during Law's era. Later it extended the French possessions in India, and its agent Dupleix established a veritable empire there, which was irrevocably lost in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris. Deprived of most of its holdings, the company was transformed into a simple commercial company. In 1769 its charter was taken away from it, and trade with the Far East became free, until in 1785 a new Indies Company was established. But this new company was not nearly so important as the old one, and the merchants, now accustomed to freedom, did not hesitate to demand its abolition.

TRADE WITH THE ANTILLES

The most important colonial trade during the second half of the eighteenth century was that with the Antilles. These colonies developed considerably in the eighteenth century. The sugar-cane, coffee, indigo and cotton plantations constituted the wealth of Guadeloupe, Martinique and especially San Domingo (which had two important cities, French Cap and Port-au-Prince), with a population of 400,000 inhabitants, of whom 42,000 were West Indian planters. On the eve of the Revolution the "American islands" sent to France merchandise of a value of 185 millions (sugar and coffee, 134 millions; cotton, 26 millions; indigo, 11 millions; cocoa and ginger, over 10 millions) and imported from the mother country merchandise of a value of 78 millions, especially manufactured articles (42 millions), edibles, wines and brandy.

A very important subsidiary trade was slavery, which brought wealth to numerous shippers of Havre and particularly of Bordeaux and Nantes. In 1789 the question of the freeing of the slaves, brought up by the partisans of the new ideas, was a source of great anxiety to the shippers, as well as the planters; at that time the Chamber of Commerce of Bordeaux, in its instructions to its extraordinary commercial delegates, declared:

"France needs its colonies for the maintenance of its commerce, and consequently it needs slaves in order to make agriculture pay in this part of the world, at least until some other expedient may have been found."

Another very important question at the end of the *ancien régime* was whether the rules of the "colonial pact" should be maintained. This pact was in the nature of restrictive legislation by virtue of which the mother country reserved for itself at home and abroad the monopoly of colonial trade. The planters could not ship their goods to foreign countries, nor could they receive directly the goods of foreign countries or of colonies depending upon other powers. But since the French Antilles could not do without the timber, flour and fish of the English colonies of America—especially after the loss of Canada and Louisiana—and since, on the other hand, the English colonies needed the coffee, sugar and molasses of the "American islands" of France, there was an active contraband trade which it was impossible to suppress. After 1763 Choiseul had to permit the English to import cod to the Antilles at 8 livres per hundredweight. Then the decree of August 30, 1784, gave foreign vessels access to some of the ports of the French islands. This was a far-reaching innovation, in line with the liberal tendencies of commercial practise that tended to establish themselves, and caused consider-

able discontent among the great merchants and shippers of the mother country.

The question of the colonial pact was aggravated, at the outbreak of the Revolution, by the campaign that the philanthropists, the so-called "friends of the blacks," engaged in for the emancipation of the negro slaves. This campaign disturbed both the merchants and the planters.

Moreover it was not only in France that colonial commerce encountered difficulties. Ever since the seventeenth century the English, Dutch and French had been trying to open the Spanish colonies for their trade, and their interloping efforts were in part successful. The Spanish colonial planters were very much embarrassed by the absurd methods of their mother country, and this was the principal cause for their defection early in the nineteenth century. The English colonists of North America tried also to rid themselves of the impediments of the commercial legislation inaugurated by the Navigation Act. It was largely for the purpose of doing this that they started the revolution that gave birth to the United States. The economic expansion of the eighteenth century no longer tolerated the restrictions of the old mercantilist policies. There opens up before us the great vista of a movement that involved the most vital interests, a movement that was truly international and affected French politics most profoundly at the end of the eighteenth century.

THE FRENCH PORTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

It is natural that the most flourishing commercial centers should have been the ports, especially the Atlantic ports. Thus the prosperity of Bordeaux increased greatly during the eighteenth century, especially on account of the trade with the Antilles. While in 1724 the maritime trade of Bordeaux amounted to 40 millions, it reached 250 millions just before the Revolution. Three hundred ten vessels sailed for the Antilles, and brought back merchandise to the value of 130 millions. The slave trade was also in a flourishing condition. An entirely new industry grew up around the colonial trade, especially distilleries and refineries. Great fortunes were built up, as for example those of Bonnafé and Gradis. Nantes also developed greatly during the eighteenth century for the same reasons. Not less than 150 vessels left this port annually for the "islands of America." The colonial commerce and the slave trade enriched the merchants and shippers, and refineries and factories for Indian products sprang up. The trade with America also brought prosperity to Rochelle, but during the second half of the century this port declined, not only because of the loss of Canada and Louisiana, but also on account of the inadequacy of the harbor, which was not deep enough for larger vessels. Saint-Malo, too, although retaining its important trade in

cloths with Spain, retrograded materially during the century, no doubt because the port, like Nantes, had no good means of communication with the rest of the kingdom. On the other hand, Havre made considerable strides after the Seven Years' War and took an ever more important part in the great maritime and colonial trade.

On the Mediterranean there was only one great port, namely Marseilles. Its development was steady throughout the century. Marseilles no longer restricted itself to trade with the Mediterranean region, but participated in increasing measure in world trade. It would have done even better, had communication across the Alps been improved.

GREAT SPREAD OF COMMERCE DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

How did foreign commerce as a whole develop in France during the eighteenth century? We can answer this question with relative accuracy by consulting the tables of imports and exports made by the customs agents. These tables became more detailed in the second half of the eighteenth century. On the basis of these Arnould was able to write his instructive book "De la balance du commerce" (On the Balance of Commerce) (1788). At the beginning of the reign of Louis XV the imports were estimated at 93 millions and the exports at

122. Toward the middle of the century considerable progress was already felt. Foreign trade rose in excess of 600 millions. The Seven Years' War brought about a very grave crisis, but after the peace of 1763 the figures increased rapidly:

	million livres
In the period from 1764 to 1776	725
" " " " 1777 to 1783	683
" " " " 1784 to 1788	1061

In 1787 the imports were estimated by Arnould at 611 millions, and the exports at 542. The commercial treaty served even to increase the preponderance of imports.

Chaptal in his "Industrie française," written in 1817, estimated the imports in 1789 at 634,365,000 francs and the exports at 438,477,000. But he remarks that the figure given for imports includes 250 millions in merchandise coming from the French colonies, so that in reality the exports exceeded the imports. France imported particularly manufactured articles, raw materials for the textile industry, wood and colonial food-products. Its exports were, above all, agricultural commodities (especially wine and brandy), silk, tobacco and colonial products. Chaptal says that the trade with the Antilles was extremely important: "the products of the colonies figured in all our shipments for more or less considerable sums, and they

formed almost the entire cargo of shipments intended for the north."

All the preceding facts lead us to believe that from 1716 to 1789 the foreign trade of France quadrupled, and it may be said furthermore that the figures given for 1825 are hardly greater than those for 1788.

The progress of commercial transactions exercised a large influence upon industrial development. This is an economic phenomenon manifested in England as well as in France. The fortunes amassed in maritime and commercial trade began to be used in industrial enterprises. In this we can see the first symptoms of an economic revolution which, in France at least, did not come to an end until the next century.

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Chapter VIII

Industrial Development in the Eighteenth Century

In the first half of the eighteenth century we witness the development of the manufactures, organized as they had been during the age of Colbert. As in the preceding century, they were directly dependent upon the royal power, which exercised a close supervision over them.

PROGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ADMINISTRATION

It is not surprising that industrial administration was improved. The Council of Commerce continued to play a very active rôle up to the end of the *ancien régime,* as is shown by its minutes published by Bonnassieux and Lelong; it tried to settle "all the difficulties regarding commerce on land and sea, factories and manufactures." Since 1730 it had a director of commerce at its head, a person of some importance. This position was held a long time by the eminent Trudaine family, father and son.

The deputies of commerce, elected in theory by the merchants or the chambers of commerce, played only a passive rôle. But sometimes they drew up

interesting memorials. More important were the chambers of commerce themselves, which developed in the course of the century. But they were more interested in commerce than in industry.

The factory inspectors, created by Colbert, were maintained until the Revolution, and even some inspectors general were created. It seems that they acquitted themselves conscientiously of their difficult and delicate functions. Some of them, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, were distinguished men, among them Desmarets, Hellot, Dupont de Nemours and Roland de la Platière. The "intendants" paid ever more attention to industrial questions. Not only did the administration often require them to make inquiries on the state of "commerce," but frequently they took the initiative in encouraging some product or other, especially new industries. From 1744 on the mines, iron works, glass factories and paper mills were more specially brought under their control. The right of jurisdiction in industrial matters extended more and more.

THE MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENTS AND THEIR MONOPOLIES

The manufacturing establishments always depended upon the royal administration, of which they were in many respects the creations.

Beside the state factories, such as the Govern-

ment Tapestry Works, the Soap Works and the porcelain works at Sèvres, of which the king was the patron, there were a great number of royal establishments, for the creation of which a government authorization was necessary. The royal establishments were encouraged by subventions, loans without interest, and direct and indirect bounties. Often they received also pecuniary aid from the provincial estates or the city municipalities.

The establishments, engaged particularly in the textile industry, secured the monopoly of some particular product within a certain radius. Thus the Van Robais of Abbeville possessed, within a radius of ten leagues, the monopoly for the manufacture of fine Dutch cloths. Although people were beginning to realize the disadvantages of monopolies, there were more establishments created during the first half of the eighteenth century.

REGULATION

Regulation, one of the essential characteristics of the old industrial organization, was maintained. It even developed further around 1750. New regulations were constantly being made "because the precautions taken by the first regulations were not sufficient," or, as a circular of Orry stated in 1740, in order to forestall "the negligence and bad faith of the manufacturers and merchants." More

minutely even than in the age of Colbert the regulations determined the quality and nature of the raw materials to be used, the nature of the equipment, the process of manufacture, and the quality of the various manufactured objects. In 1735 the royal authority regulated the glass industry, and in 1739 the paper industry.

The administration tried also to render the regulations more effective by means of more rigorous control. The number of offices for factory control was increased, and their methods were improved.

The regulations were a cause of continual vexation and a perpetual hindrance to industry. They were also an obstacle to inventions. For example, from 1719 to 1731 a struggle was necessary in order to obtain the right to use wrought lead, which was a considerable improvement over cast lead, the use of which was prescribed by laws and regulations. The needs of production could no longer be brought into harmony with the petty regulations of the old organization of labor.

THE PROGRESS OF INDUSTRY IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Nevertheless great industrial progress was made during the period from 1715 to 1750, especially beginning with 1730. Thus the manufacture of silk and of gold and silver cloth extended to Paris

and the south. In Languedoc the cloth industry seems to have been quite flourishing. In the east and in Normandy the cotton industry had developed. Being a new industry, both in England and France, it escaped regulation more than other industries. Then there were new tin works and, in Dauphiné, new steel works. In Dauphiné, especially in Angoumois, there were new paper mills. Coal mines, little exploited before, were exploited more methodically, both in the north and in the Saint-Étienne basin. The mines at Anzin and Carmaux became active, and the decree of 1744 gave a new impetus to the coal industry. Just as much attention was paid to their development as there was to the problem presented by deforestation, for which the iron works and other factories were held responsible.

THE NEW ECONOMIC DOCTRINES

The industrial changes were certainly hastened by the new ideas that made themselves felt toward the middle of the eighteenth century. The cause of commercial and industrial freedom was sustained first of all by Vincent de Gournay, whom an observation of the facts had enlightened, and who saw in the system of guilds, regulations, privileges and monopolies so many obstacles in the path of production and consumption. Hence it was necessary to free industrial production of all hindrances.

Gournay undertook an active campaign in favor of the abolition of the guilds and the abandonment of the regulations. As director of commerce he succeeded at least in making the regulations and the monopolies less harsh in practise. Due to his influence the bureau of commerce granted no more exclusive privileges. He succeeded in winning over to his ideas a wide following among the young administrators, such as Trudaine and Turgot. The influence of Quesnay and his disciples was also considerable. After 1750 the physiocratic doctrine was actively propagated, tending to do away with the old mercantilist conceptions.

WEAKENING OF THE SYSTEM OF REGULATIONS

As a matter of fact the system of regulations was considerably modified in the second half of the eighteenth century. A noteworthy indication of this was the discontinuance of the prohibition on printed and dyed cloths, which had remained in force during the entire first half of the century. From 1750 on a movement toward freedom made itself felt. Then a hateful reversion to the prohibition, about 1755, provoked the great "dispute on prints," carried on by men such as Forbonnais, a champion of tradition, and, on the other hand, by the friends of freedom, such as Gournay and Morellet. The latter were answered in turn by the "Summary observations of the manufacturers

of Lyons, Rouen, Tours and the Six Bodies." Finally the edict of 1759, promulgated by the controller general Silhouette, authorized the admission and manufacture of prints. That was the beginning of an era of great prosperity for the new industry of print cloths and calico.

From this time on, although regulation continued to have legal sanction, it was not applied so strictly any more. This tendency was manifested everywhere. In Languedoc the government even recommended to the inspectors to watch over the observation of the regulations concerning the cloth industry with a spirit of lenience, and to concern themselves only "with the good faith of the manufacturers." In his letters patent of May 5, 1779, Necker recognized that it was impossible to apply the old regulations literally. Cloth manufactured in accordance with these regulations was to bear a special mark, and the rest only a "mark of grace," and the nature of the dye was also to be indicated. New letters of June 4, 1780, abolished, in the woolen industry, certain provisions relative to quality, length and width of the pieces. They explained also the nature of the reform: "It has been our intention to encourage talent and the spirit of invention, exempting from every examination and inspection all cloth which the manufacturer desires to produce in free trade, but requiring that cloth so manufactured be plainly marked, so that the confidence of the public may never be imposed upon."

The fall of Necker marked a reaction from this point of view. Toward the outbreak of the Revolution many goods were sold without any such label. Poor work was no longer penalized by fines or confiscation. In practise the old regulations had lost all their effectiveness.

EXTENSION OF RURAL INDUSTRY

One of the characteristic features of the industrial development of the eighteenth century was the extension of rural industry. It is a strong indication of the hold gained by commercial capitalism upon manufacturing.

The edict of 1762, which gave to the inhabitants of the rural sections the right to manufacture any kind of cloth without membership in the guilds, did not have the importance that one might attribute to it. Without doubt it facilitated the progress of rural industry, but it merely confirmed an existing state of affairs.

Clear distinction can be made between two types of rural industry. The first applied to regions in which the agricultural resources were insufficient and in which city life was not very active, as in Brittany and Lower Maine. In these sections the rural textile industry did not compete with the few existing urban trades. The merchants restricted themselves exclusively to commercial transactions, did not direct production, and did not

distribute the raw materials, which the peasant secured on his farm. Rather did they devote themselves to the bleaching and finishing of the cloth. Only in exceptional cases did they undertake production. In Brittany and Lower Maine the rural industry did not give birth to capitalist industry. When it declined at the end of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century, these provinces became almost exclusively agricultural.

On the other hand, in sections like Flanders, Picardy and Upper Normandy, where agriculture prospered, and urban industry was plentiful, and where rural industry developed especially because many peasants were deprived of property, the rural artisan depended often upon manufacturers who gave him orders and directions for his work. In any case the merchants distributed among the rural laborers the raw material and even furnished them with the looms. There were those who supported rural production for the purpose of ruining the urban industry, as the masters and journeymen of Troyes complained. Others at the end of the *ancien régime*, in the hosiery and cotton spinning trades, introduced mechanical looms, a thing which made the competition of the rural sections still more dangerous for the urban industry. For the rise of an industry on a large scale and the transformation of the merchant-manufacturer into a captain of industry, it was necessary that the trades be concentrated in factories.

THE FOOTHOLD OF COMMERCIAL CAPITALISM IN INDUSTRY

In the urban trades of the textile industry we often see the same influence of commercial capital, which had the effect of reducing the otherwise independent artisans to the rank of wage-earners. The most striking illustration is furnished by the silk industry of Lyons. Even in the seventeenth century distinction had been made between master-merchants and master-workmen, as the regulation of 1667 shows. The regulation of 1744 perpetuated the economic dependence of the master-workmen, who became the hired employees of the merchants. Their dependence was made all the more complete by the fact that the merchants furnished them with the raw material, as well as with the patterns, and often advanced them the sums necessary for the purchase of equipment. Finally the price of the workmanship was fixed by the merchant; the wages were determined only after the completion of the work.

In the cloth trade a similar development, but a less general one, was noticed. The influence of commercial capitalism upon labor can be explained especially on technical grounds, because of the multiplicity of operations necessary in the process of manufacture. The wool had to be washed and scoured. It was beaten, carded and combed, and then it was given to the spinners of either sex.

After the spinning came the winding, spooling and warping. Then the material was dyed, and if it was carded wool, it had to be felted. Finally there were the finishing touches, such as teaseling, clipping and scraping. In this way it is possible to explain the intervention of the merchant, who took it upon himself to direct the entire process of manufacturing, and this intervention became still more necessary when industry spread to the rural sections. This commercial concentration, which at the end of the eighteenth century was complete in the greatest centers (Sedan, Reims, Louviers and Elbeuf), was not manifested everywhere. Sometimes, as at Amiens, the work was distributed among several manufacturers successively, independent of one another. In the south the small manufacturers were still numerous.

THE ORIGINS OF INDUSTRIAL CONCENTRATION

Where commercial concentration was highly developed, industrial concentration often followed. The merchant-manufacturers were interested in grouping their workmen under the same roof, in order to supervise their work and avoid the expense of transportation. This was the case with a certain number of cloth manufacturers in the south, as those at Trivalle, near Carcassonne, at Villeneuve, and near Clermont. At Montauban a manufacturer had a building constructed which

cost him 125,000 livres. At Reims almost half of the trades were grouped in factories. At Louviers the concentration was still more marked. Fifteen manufacturers there employed thousands of workmen. One of them constructed an enormous factory at a cost of 200,000 livres; it sheltered five different factory units.

In the printing of cloth, industrial concentration on a large scale took place very early, even before the introduction of machinery. This is explained if we consider, as Ch. Ballot says, that "the mechanical conditions of manufacture necessitated the concentration of great capital, the congregation of workmen in shops and the division of work among them." Much space was necessary for bleaching of cloth, vast buildings for the workshops and large rooms for drying. The equipment was complicated and costly, and vast supplies of raw materials were necessary. Furthermore the many operations required a division of labor among many classes of specialized workmen, all of whom had to work in the same plant. It is not surprising that at the end of the *ancien régime* this industry occupied more than one hundred factories producing prints of a value in excess of 12 millions of livres. Most of them belonged to companies formed by partners or by stock companies, which were very prosperous. The Oberkampf company of Jouy, for example, had a capital of nearly nine millions in 1789.

THE PROGRESS OF MACHINERY

But the concentration of work and industry, a condition necessary for the development of a great capitalist industry, could not become a general phenomenon except through the triumph of machinery. Yet in the eighteenth century machinery in France had been introduced only in a few industries.

Machines appeared first in the silk mills early in the century, and then developed as a result of the inventions of Vaucanson. This industry also gave rise to great factories, such as those of Jubié at Sône.

But in the cotton industry—a new enterprise—the use of machinery developed most intensively. The mechanical inventions came from England. John Kay's invention of the flying shuttle led to many improvements. We owe to our English neighbors also the spinning jenny (invented in 1765), the water-frame, invented by Arkwright in 1767, and the mule-jenny of Crompton. The spinning-jenny, being a small loom with arms, did not at all harm the rural industry that was scattered here and there. The mule-jenny, on the other hand, favored concentration.

Even before 1760 Holker had advocated the introduction of English machines. But later Milne, another Englishman, played a particularly important part in manufacturing looms for use in the

rural sections. He worked at Muette. Between 1775 and 1780 the inventions of Arkwright and Cartwright began to be introduced in France. Important concentrated factories for cotton spinning were established, for example those of Lecler at Brives, those of Martin and Flesselles at Amiens, and those of the Duke of Orléans—that great captain of industry—at Orléans and Montargis.

To be sure, France was employing only 900 jennies at the time, while there were 20,000 in use in England. Only a beginning had been made. Yet in 1789 the progress of machinery was taking shape and was destined to develop in the course of the following century. The memorial of Tribert, inspector of manufacturers in the section of Orléans, noted the progress of cotton-spinning machinery in 1790, which was doing away with the spinning-wheel. He said:

"For the past two years there have been brought to Orléans a considerable number of these machines, newly constructed in France on the model of those used in England (Arkwright's machines and mule-jennies). There has just been constructed a huge building for housing them. The director plans to operate 6000 spools day and night by means of a steam pump, which will make it possible to spin 1000 pounds of cotton in 24 hours. The annual output will amount to 900,000 livres in value."

And Tribert adds:

"By means of these machines, the number of which is beginning to increase greatly in France, it will soon be possible

to decrease the price of spun cotton, but the profit on this product will also diminish in proportion, so that it will be to the interest of the manufacturers to have their cloth finished into garments."

This is equivalent to saying that the process of dyeing will also have to be improved.

In some paper mills, notably in the one at Annonay, machines were substituted for manual labor. But most of these mills employed only a few laborers under any circumstances.

In the metallurgical industry wood-burning furnaces were beginning to be replaced by coke-burning furnaces, as had been done at Montcenis on a large scale. In 1787 the stock company of Crausot, comprising 4000 shares of a value of 2500 livres per share was founded. It had sufficient capital to enable it to use steam-propelled machines and steam-hammers, an excellent but expensive equipment.

A memorial of 1787 contains significant facts in this matter:

"It is possible to cast in the four furnaces ten million livres of cast-iron per year, at the rate of 2,500,000 livres per furnace. Thus the navy department could if necessary receive from Montcenis 2000 cannon in one year. . . . The steam engines that operate the bellows, hammers and drills of Montcenis take the place of the waterpower that the other foundries of the kingdom use. The railways that have been built at Montcenis, in imitation of those found in England, where some are five or six leagues in length, seem very expensive at first glance. But when one sees on this railway a single horse

pulling the weight of five horses, one ceases to marvel at the scope of such an outlay."

In the foundry of Indret, near Nantes, established in 1777, there were expended 307,000 livres in 1778; 577,000 in 1779; and 830,000 in 1780. But the factories of Creusot and Indret were rather exceptional. Almost all the iron factories were still very modest enterprises with primitive tools and only eight or ten laborers. The foundries were scattered everywhere, especially in the forest regions, for they used only wood as fuel.

THE COAL MINES. GREAT CAPITALISTIC EXPLOITATIONS

The coal mines indicated most clearly the coming triumph of great capitalistic industry. As a result of the decree of 1744, forbidding the exploitation of mines except by royal concession, great companies undertook the working of the coal mines at the expense of the owners and the former operators. For they alone were able to afford the necessary mechanical innovations, the soundings, the opening of the levels and pits, ventilation, and the draining of water. They alone could afford the steam-driven machines, the so-called *pompes à feu*. These stock companies, for example those of Alais, Carmaux and Anzin, managed by energetic and intelligent business men and supported by enterprising gentlemen, such as the prince of Croy

and the chevalier de Solages, had the appearance of great capitalistic enterprises. The Anzin company, in 1789, had 4000 laborers and 600 horses; it used 12 steam engines; it mined 3,750,000 hundredweights of coal; its profits amounted to 1,200,000 livres, although the price of coal had decreased appreciably. Scientific management, concentration of many workmen, application of considerable capital—here we have all the characteristics of great capitalistic industry manifesting themselves in the coal industry before the end of the *ancien régime*.

PETTY INDUSTRY ALWAYS PREDOMINANT

But in 1789 the era of machinery and industrial concentration was only in its infancy. The predominant system in all France was that of petty enterprises employing only a few workmen. We take as an example the generality of Orléans, described to us by the inspector Tribert in 1790. There was at Orléans, to be sure, a great cotton-spinning factory, and another was being erected at Montargis. But the stockings were manufactured in 55 shops employing 2287 workmen. These were scattered throughout the city and its outskirts. Knitted hosiery was a rural industry that employed 12,000 persons at Beauce. The woolen goods and dyes were in the hands of rather poor manufacturers. Gloves were manufactured by 21 masters, who employed 900 workmen.

No doubt commercial capitalism began to influence industry in France on the eve of the Revolution. But the development was much slower than in England. We can detect only symptoms of an industrial revolution. The revolution itself was not to take place until half a century later.

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Chapter IX

The Classes of Workmen and Merchants

We must now examine the social effects of the economic phenomena that we have just discussed. Among the industrial and commercial population the differences were accentuated during the course of the eighteenth century. This was a consequence of the economic expansion.

I. The Artisans

THEIR MODE OF LIFE

Although this had always been inferior, it seems to have become even less satisfactory in the eighteenth century. In most of the provincial cities, many masters who were affected by the financial ruin of their guilds were embarrassed, had a low standard of living, and found themselves reduced to a condition bordering upon misery, as is shown by the report of the governor of Brittany under date of 1755.

In the eighteenth century, as in the seventeenth, their life was rather penurious. Their quarters were uncomfortable. At Angers, as we are told

by the "Souvenirs d'un nonagénaire," "the lodgings of the artisans were for the most part very crowded. Outside of their shop or workroom, they often had one large sleeping room for the whole family, and one other room for the journeymen, whom they were accustomed to feed and lodge." The most frequented shops looked quite wretched. But at the end of the eighteenth century a few shops with glass windows began to appear, at least in the large cities.

The food was coarse, often insufficient. The wife of a cutler at Châtellerault described it as follows: "Bread and soup several times a day, because meat is too expensive; soup with herbs, soup with carrots, and soup with onions and oil. At home water is drunk, but on Mondays the master goes to the inn with his journeymen and drinks wine."

THEIR CONDITION WAS NOT UNIFORM

Moreover, the condition of the artisans varied considerably according to the trade that they followed. The only ones who were really comfortable were those who dealt with food supplies, as the innkeepers, the pastry-cooks, the confectioners, sometimes the bakers, and more rarely the butchers, whose trade was not very lucrative. Those dealing with clothing were not so well off. They were divided into many poorly situated

classes and competed with one another. This was true of the tailors and shoemakers. In the building trades most of the masters were not very affluent, although we find among the masons and carpenters contractors who possessed some capital. In the urban iron industries no sign of such a transformation was apparent as yet. The manufacturers of edge-tools and the turners were still in very poor circumstances. Among the dyers and leather workers the conditions were quite varied.

ARTISANS LOSING THEIR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

We find a small minority of artisans tending to rise above their class, but the great majority were losing their independence more and more and were in danger of becoming mere wage-earners. This was the case with many engaged in the cloth industry, who came ever more under the economic domination of the clothing merchants. It was the case particularly with the silk workers at Lyons, as has been shown quite conclusively by M. Justin Godart. The regulation of 1744, which strengthened that of 1667, added more severity to the "letter of credit," which formulated the work that the master was obliged to deliver to the merchant, making it very difficult to sever relations with the merchant for whom he was working, and fixing the price of the work without consultation of the master. Thus an aristocracy of merchants held

the proletarian workmen under their thumb. This was the result of an unfortunate development. The merchants, who often had considerable capital at their disposal, reached a point where they dictated to the workmen, who had no ready cash. This condition became more prevalent with the increase of production and the growth of the market.

As a matter of fact, the price paid for work by the merchants was not enough to afford the masters a decent livelihood. Many of them were reduced to misery and clamored in vain for an equitable schedule. Their budget always showed a deficit, even when business was good. The working hours were excessively long. The abbot Bertholon declared: "Invariably the master-workmen rises before dawn and continues his work until well into the night, in order by long hours to make up for the inadequate compensation." Revolts, too, broke out frequently. They were repressed harshly and did not serve to improve the lot of the workmen.

II. The Tradesmen, Merchants and Factory Directors

DIVERSITY OF CONDITIONS

Among the guilds of merchants some members, by virtue of their economic condition, belonged to the high bourgeoisie. These were the apothecaries,

the printers and book dealers, the goldsmiths, the haberdashers, and the cloth and silk merchants. But in other guilds very diverse conditions were found. This was true of the grocers. Furthermore, there were very many merchants on a small scale, among them the old-clothes merchants, particularly the retailers, the hucksters, etc.

Among the commercial bourgeoisie the highest place was held by the wholesale merchants, who escaped the guild organization. We have already noted the part played by them, and how in the textile industry especially they began to exercise their economic domination over the artisans. They paved the way directly for the great industrial employers. In the ports like Nantes, Bordeaux and Marseilles the shippers were the most important class among the merchants and played a leading part. Besides, they did not limit themselves to fitting out vessels. Often they engaged in commission business and handled maritime insurance.

The directors of manufacturing establishments must be put into the same class. Sometimes they seem to have been great capitalists, or grantees of mines. Among them were Mathieu and Tubeuf, operators on a large scale, who headed important stock companies.

The wholesale merchants already possessed a leading position in the ranks of the third estate. Thus, in the electoral assemblies of 1789, they often

eclipsed the masters of the guilds, although they were not as numerous as the latter, and frequently they, together with the lawyers and members of the high bourgeoisie, were alone instrumental in drawing up the memorials of the third estate. Opposition made itself felt between the merchants and the artisans, while the masters of the trades and the journeymen usually had identical interests.

THE MODE OF LIFE OF THE COMMERCIAL BOURGEOISIE

Since there were great differences between the condition of the simple tradesmen and that of the merchants, their mode of life was also quite different. The tradesmen, even when they were in easy circumstances, lived very simply. They had no living room and ate their meals in the kitchen. On the other hand, the merchants led a life that was often more luxurious than that of the nobility. The ship-owners of Nantes, and those of Bordeaux and Saint-Malo, had splendid homes and enjoyed all the luxuries of life. In the second half of the century we find a greater development in luxury and comfort. In small cities, such as Laval, the cloth merchants built new houses or rebuilt and refurnished their old ones. They were no longer contented with one heated room, and they no longer lived in the kitchen. We find them striving for a prosperity that seems quite modern.

III. The Journeymen

THE VARIOUS CATEGORIES

Among these we must distinguish between the workmen of the organized trades and those of the factories. The latter suffered less restriction, and often no regular apprenticeship was required of them. It was also easier for them to avoid passing through the various grades. Yet on the other hand they were subject to the more severe discipline of the shops. It was also difficult for them to quit their factory. They needed a written permit for this purpose. This was already equivalent to the obligation of the livret. Upon those who left the country and who were considered deserters, severe penalties were inflicted. The workmen of the organized trades were treated more paternally. The masters often looked upon them as belonging to their own class.

LIVING CONDITIONS

The standard of life of the laborer did not differ much from that of the master, although the former was inferior to the latter. Generally the laborer lived in an uncomfortable attic room, and his primitive furnishings were hardly worth more than 100 livres. By his dress he was distinguished from other social classes to a much greater extent than today. When the journeyman was

given lodging and board by his master, his living conditions were apt to be quite variable, depending upon the particular trade and the master. The stationers, for example, succeeded in obtaining very good treatment.

The harshness of conditions among the journeymen is shown particularly by the length of the working hours and the wages.

As a general rule the day began quite early and ended late. In some of the shops at Versailles the hours were from four in the morning until eight at night. In most of the trades at Paris the day was sixteen hours long, and the binders and printers, who worked only fourteen, were considered privileged. It is true that work was less intense than it is in our day and that holidays imposed by the festival-days were frequent. Nevertheless the working days were very burdensome.

The wages varied considerably, depending upon the trades and the locality. The most fortunate journeymen, the skilled workmen in the cities, could earn 40 sous. But in the textile industry the average hardly exceeded 20 or 25 sous. In Brittany a weaver rarely received more than 10 or 12 sous, and a female spinner five or six sous. In the mines too the laborers often earned less than 15 sous and the skilled workmen between 20 and 25. In the cities there were numerous workmen engaged in trades on a small scale who could not earn a living. To be sure, the wages rose during

the reign of Louis XVI, but during that period the cost of living increased to an even larger extent, so that the condition of the workmen seems to have become worse.

An indication of the precarious condition of the workmen is furnished by the fact that whenever a crisis came numerous workmen were positively reduced to mendicity. This misery was particularly striking during the crisis of 1787–1789 and helped to bring about the Revolution.

LABOR ORGANIZATION. THE UNIONS OF JOURNEYMEN

The reason why the working class did not succeed in improving its condition is found in the fact that there was no strong labor organization.

Of course the journeymen, excluded from the brotherhoods of the masters, formed special brotherhoods, which it was found impossible to abolish. They formed also general organizations, that is, unions of journeymen, which were restricted almost exclusively to the itinerant trades of the *tour de France*. But the so-called *compagnons du devoir*, or *devorants*, and the *compagnons du devoir de liberté*, or *gavots*, bore only a slight resemblance to the modern trades unions. They were secret associations, in which a ritual and secret proceedings played an important part. Moreover the unions of

journeymen constituted organizations of defense and offense against the masters. They established mutual aid and exercised influence in the hiring of workmen, to the great dissatisfaction of the masters, who were often black-listed by means of circular letters sent around to other journeymen. Accordingly they rendered great service to those engaged in the trades of the *tour de France,* that is the itinerant trades. But the rivalry existing between the unions of journeymen, which was often manifested by bloody brawls, hindered them from playing a really effective part. This deplorable rivalry shows clearly to what a slight extent the laboring class had as yet become conscious of its collective interests.

And yet the workmen in certain trades stood out because of the strength of their organization. An example is furnished by the stationers, who through their organization obtained better living conditions. Another example is found in the case of the hatters, who went so far as to fraternize with the Belgian workers, as M. des Marez has shown. It seems also that there existed at this early date mutual aid societies that in reality were organizations calculated to resist oppression.

STRIKES

Temporary coalitions became more frequent during the eighteenth century than they had been

before. But they were above all violent outbreaks of anger that were quickly suppressed. Some strikes, such as the strike of the Paris printers in 1724, were caused by the desire to prevent foreign or incompetent workmen from being employed in the shops with a view to decreasing the wages. Others, such as the strike of the binders in Paris (1776), aimed to reduce the working hours. But the chief issue was that of wages. In 1724–1725, when there was an effort made to reduce wages for the sake of decreasing prices, general commotion was felt among the artisans in Paris, but it was quickly suppressed. In the reign of Louis XVI there were extended strikes in Paris; even the day laborers, hitherto unorganized, formed an association. In 1787 a serious strike broke out among the employes of the hat industry at Marseilles.

But generally the strikes failed because they were almost always restricted to a single guild or a single city. On the other hand, the masters joined forces against the journeymen in an effort to keep down wages and to intimidate those of their own colleagues who were disposed to yield to the claims of the workmen.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

We should take into consideration the fact that during the eighteenth century the municipal pow-

ers and the royal authority were particularly hostile to the claims of the workers. During the era of Louis XVI the strikes of the shearers at Sedan and those of the journeymen at Paris were repressed with severity.

Even when the state inclined to a relaxation of the regulations concerning manufacturing, it was actively engaged in strengthening the regulations applying to the personnel. It tried especially to bind the workman to his employer. This is shown clearly by the letters patent of January, 1749, which forbade the workers, on pain of a fine of 100 livres, to leave an employer without written consent. Likewise the journeymen were forbidden to hold meetings, "form brotherhoods" and "intrigue for the sake of getting one another positions with certain masters, or for the sake of leaving them, or in order to prevent masters in any way from selecting their own workmen, whether they be Frenchmen or foreigners." In this way an attempt was made to subject the workman to the master, the purpose being to favor manufacturing and to increase production.

The edict of Turgot of 1776 prohibited all journeymen's associations, as well as all masters' guilds, and the progressive minister kept in force all police measures aimed at the associations of workmen. Finally the police regulation of September 12, 1781, accentuated the earlier restrictive regulations and prohibited the workmen from forming

brotherhoods, holding meetings and intriguing for the sake of increasing their wages. They could leave their master only after having given him notice in advance and finished the work in hand. They could not be accepted by another master if they did not present a written dismissal from their previous master. The obligation of the livret had become quite general. All authorities, parliaments, governors and police officers, decreed against coalitions and assemblies and condemned workmen as "intriguers." Great hostility was shown even against mutual aid associations that restricted themselves, as did the association of crockery workers of Nevers, to assuring their members of aid in case of sickness and to helping the aged. The aid society founded by the hatters of Marseilles in 1772 was brutally suppressed. Undoubtedly it was feared, perhaps not without reason, that these associations served only as blinds for more militant organizations.

THERE WAS NO LABOR PROBLEM AS YET

Another proof that the laboring class did not yet count in the social makeup of the *ancien régime* is the fact that it hardly participated in the national conferences prior to the summoning of the States General in 1789. While the peasants had opportunity to express their grievances in numerous parish memorials, the journeymen were

hardly able to get a hearing. Only the masters of the trades took an active part in the electoral assemblies. Hence we possess only a few memorials of the journeymen of Troyes and Marseilles, and generally their demands were identical with those of the masters. This is true at least of the workers of Troyes, who, like their employers, rose against the practises of the merchants, protesting against the introduction of machinery and the extension of rural industry. It is quite clear that in 1789 the workmen did not realize their own interests as a class. They had no clear idea of the reforms necessary in labor legislation, and when in 1791 the law of Le Chapelier prohibited all labor coalitions, it seems that the laboring class of Paris did not become unusually indignant. They continued to agitate almost exclusively in favor of higher wages.

Thus the labor question did not in any sense present itself in the way that it did later. The struggle between capital and labor was not yet clearly discernible. Perhaps it loomed in a hazy manner, but it did not appear clearly until its theoretical formulation had been laid down. And this is explained readily if we consider that there were still relatively few workmen, that industry on a small scale was still predominant, that machinery had scarcely made its appearance, that industrial concentration was only in its beginnings and also that the thinkers who in the nineteenth cen-

tury were interested in industrial organization, turned in the eighteenth century primarily toward political organization, the agrarian question, or increased production. The social question of 1789 was a question concerning the peasants, and it is this that the revolutionary assemblies, under the stress of agrarian troubles, had to settle.

Shall we say that the laboring class did not play any part at all during the revolutionary crisis? Artisans and journeymen, as M. M. Rouff has shown in several interesting articles, formed the active element during the revolutionary days and had an important place in the popular gatherings. But the social question stirring the popular masses was not that of labor organization; it was rather one of food. Unemployment, misery and fear of starvation were the motives that impelled the proletariat of the cities. Before the labor question could rise, a profound economic transformation, the development of industry on a large scale and the triumph of machinery were necessary. With the rise of these phenomena, and by virtue of the socialist doctrines, the laboring class became clearly conscious of its interests as a class.

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Chapter X

The Financiers

The class of financiers comprised two great groups, the bankers and the officers of finance who had something to do with the management of the royal finances.

THE BANKERS

The bankers and business men played only a secondary rôle at this time. The bank of Lyons, very important in the sixteenth century, had lost most of its old prestige. At Paris the number of bankers increased during the eighteenth century, especially in the second half of the century, but they were more interested in making loans to the state than they were in industrial and commercial affairs. Exchange was still one of their most important functions. They received Spanish American piasters in great quantities, as a result of the trade in Cadiz, and exchanged them for French currency. In the provinces there were very few bankers. A city such as Angers had none at all in 1789. In Rennes there were only two or three, due to the proximity to Saint-Malo and the silk trade, which in Brittany led to considerable com-

mercial activity. Most banking transactions were carried on by the financial officers or the merchants.

We must mention also the important part played by the Genevese in French banking. Among them were such men as Thelusson, Isaac Vernet, Saladin, and Necker. The history of their activity still remains to be written.

The bankers of the court were particularly important. Among them were Jean Joseph de la Borde, one of the most influential financiers of the period, who gave each of his two daughters a dowry of a million, and Magon de la Balue, of the great shipping family of Saint-Malo, who took part in all important transactions and became farmer general.

Among the great business men we should mention also Samuel Bernard, who profited particularly by the difficulties of the treasury at the end of the reign of Louis XIV. He was not very scrupulous in his transactions, and in 1709 he failed with liabilities of 30 millions. But early in the reign of Louis XV he was the most powerful financier. Only the Crozat family could rival him. The family of Pâris, descended from the son of a tavern keeper of Moirans in Dauphiné, had made its fortune as a purveyor to the army. It was Pâris-Duverney who was entrusted with the liquidation of the system of Law. Although not engaged in business during the ministry of Fleury (1726–1743), Pâris-Duverney and his son, Pâris de Montmartel, remained during the reign of Louis XV

the great capitalists involved in all commercial and industrial transactions that required large sums. Among the business men, the *traitants* and *partisans*, who collected the various royal taxes, often made enormous profits. This explains their unpopularity.

THE FINANCIAL OFFICERS

But the officers of the royal finances had a place quite as important as that of the men of business. They were very numerous. Each generality had two alternating receivers general and at each election a special receiver. Then came the officers of the various financial bureaus. Thus in a city like Rennes, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the capitation rolls mention beside the treasurer general of the Estates of Brittany a receiver of the domains, a receiver of the town dues, a controller of the waters and forests, two receivers of the *fuages*, a receiver for the executions of real property, a farm agent, a treasurer for wars, a director of food supplies, a director of the treasury, a director and an assayer of the mint, a receiver for tobacco, a director and a general cashier for debts, and *officiers du contrôle* (a director and traveling agents). All these officers, who had high quotas of the capitation at their disposal, enjoyed very great prosperity. In Brittany there were no officers for the gabel as yet.

THE FARMERS GENERAL

In the first rank of the financiers were the farmers general. Their importance becomes clear if we consider that everything which we call indirect taxes depended upon the general farm. Among these taxes were those on aids, registrations, the domain, drafts, the gabel and the tobacco tax. Every six years the lease of these revenues was allotted to an individual for a certain sum. As warrantors he had financiers who were incorrectly known as farmers general, to the number of forty. Each one paid security, which amounted at first to a million, and then to 1,560,000 livres beginning with the year 1768. The interest on this security was 10 per cent, and in addition there was an indemnity fixed at 30,000 livres. The gradual rise in the cost of the leases shows how they increased in value. In 1726 they brought 80 million; in 1744, 92; in 1756, 110; in 1768, 132; in 1774, 152. In 1780 Necker took the aids away from the general farm and placed them under special control. He took away also the domains, which were entrusted to a "general administration." Yet the last lease, that of 1786, reached the sum of 150 million nevertheless. The abuses which were attributed to the general farm were aggravated by the *croupes,* that is the quotas of interest paid to persons who had helped to furnish the sureties for the farmers general, or who had

helped a certain financier get a position as farmer general. Nor can we overlook the abuses to which the collection of the farmed taxes led, but these abuses were alleviated toward the end of the *ancien régime*. Hence it is not necessary to believe literally what the pamphleteers, such as Darigrand, the author of the "Anti-financier" (1763), or Mirabeau say.

Certain farmers general were severely reproached for their humble extraction. To be sure, we find among them, particularly in the early part of the century, men who had started life as menials, as for example Teissier and La Bouexière. But most of them had begun as financial agents. This was the case with Bouret, receiver general of la Rochelle, and then treasurer general of the household of the king. One of his colleagues had been receiver general at Tours. Grimod de la Reynière had a father who had been a financier. Dupin was the son of a receiver of the *taille*, and his fortune was due to his marriage with a natural daughter of Samuel Bernard. Lallemand de Retz, Live de Bellegarde and d'Arnoncourt, farmers general in 1726, were members of well situated families. Some were even members of the legal nobility, as d'Arconville and d'Angray de Vallerand.

It cannot be denied that many of them had enormous fortunes. Bouret was credited with having an income of 1,500,000 livres, and Thoynard, in 1753, left 19 millions to his sons, who lost no

time in squandering their patrimony. The farmers general became notorious also for their pompous display. At Paris they built splendid mansions; among these was the house of Samuel Bernard, the interesting remains of which are still preserved in the Musée André. In the country they had superb residences, not to mention the "small houses" or *folies* in the suburbs. In the immediate vicinity of Paris, in Passy, Auteuil, Vanves, Ivry, Puteaux and Neuilly, the rich financiers had splendid country homes. They had the richest furnishings and the works of art that revealed the best taste. The most skilled artisans and artists were in their employ. The memoirs and correspondence of the time reveal also the fact that the financiers squandered much money foolishly upon their mistresses and upon actresses and operatic singers.

SOCIAL RÔLE OF THE FINANCIERS

The financiers no doubt contributed to the splendor of Parisian life during the eighteenth century. Rousseau, the friend of simple customs, was particularly struck by this. In the "Nouvelle Héloise" he shows that the arts were practised only in the interest of this wealthy class. The dramatic authors, such as Molière, did not deal with the common people. They depicted only those who "have a carriage, a porter and a steward."

But Rousseau was a friend, a habitué and a guest at the Ermitage of Madame d'Épinay, whose house was open to men of letters. Voltaire too had dealings with financiers, notably with La Popelinière, the lavish and enlightened patron of the arts. Need we recall that Helvétius in his salon and at his table gathered all the distinguished writers and illustrious thinkers of Paris?

As a matter of fact, these financiers wished to play the rôle of Mæcenases. In order to beautify their homes they appealed to the artists, painters and sculptors. The farmers general subscribed to superb editions of the *Contes* and *Fables* of La Fontaine. These editions of the farmers general are now very much sought by bibliophiles.

THE NEW GENERATION OF FARMERS GENERAL

But beginning in 1755, a great change was noted in the personnel of the farmers general. The frivolous class began to constitute only a slight minority, and the rough-hewn *Turcarets* [1] had quite disappeared. Numerous farmers general now distinguished themselves by their intelligence, honesty and knowledge of business. Examples are Jacques Delahante, farmer general from 1765, and Paulze, the father-in-law of Lavoisier. Lavoisier himself early became noted for his expertness in

[1] *Turcaret* is a celebrated comedy of Le Sage, in which the financiers are ridiculed. It was written in 1709.

the field of economics. He devoted a good part of his fortune to researches in chemistry. He was always generous and unprejudiced, and a credit to French science. The fame of Benjamin de la Borde was not so great, but he was distinguished as a musician, an artist and a littérateur. In short, we may well subscribe to the opinion of Mollien when he declares:

"The great majority of the farmers of 1780, by their wit and their gentle manners, took an honorable place in the first rank of French society, and some of them, by virtue of the trend that their studies had taken, would have been disposed to serve their state better if the ministers, with a more thorough knowledge of their cenutry, had better recognized the sources of the public wealth, had drawn from it more wisely, and had directed it more skilfully toward its true goal."

It is indeed true that the excessive taxes collected by the farmer general served to make him unpopular. Thus the memorials of 1789 agree in demanding "the complete abolition of the general farms, which contribute to the enrichment of only a few men," while ruining the people. And although we can not approve the merciless rigor which was exercised, we can understand the trial and condemnation of 1793.

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Chapter XI

High and Middle Bourgeoisie

There was a whole class of the third estate whose existence depended less directly upon the economic system. They were the lawyers, the physicians, and also the members of the bourgeoisie who were thought of as "living as noblemen," that is those who lived from their income.

THE LIBERAL PROFESSIONS

Lawyers, attorneys, notaries and seignorial agents —all those engaged in the practise of law—belonged to the same social class. In the first rank, especially in the parliamentary cities, as Rennes or Dijon, were the advocates and attorneys. At Rennes the attorneys in the parliament, to the number of 80, were often very well off. The advocates, who were still more numerous, were as a whole less affluent, but a certain number of them, enjoying a great reputation, had an important place in the city. This explains the important rôle played in 1789 by men such as Le Chapelier, Lanjuinais, Glezen, etc. The attorneys of the presidial seats, and principally the notaries, were not nearly

so well situated as the advocates. The office of notary in a large city brought scarcely more than 16,000 livres, while in the rural sections it was not worth more than 3,000. As for the judges of the royal seats (the bailiwicks and seneschals' districts) or of the seignorial seats, they were very numerous in all parts of France. Although many of them had the title of advocate, they formed a class that was much less prosperous than the advocates and attorneys of the parliamentary cities.

In general the members of the other free professions were much more unfavorably situated than the members of the legal profession. But in the larger cities the physicians seemed to enjoy much comfort, and especially at the end of the *ancien régime* they had considerable prestige. Bagot of Saint Brieuc was mayor of the city and later became a deputy to the legislative assembly. Then there were the famous physicians of Paris, such as Vicq d'Azyr, Guillotin and Tronchin. The surgeons were far more numerous. For a long time confused with the tradesmen, they were, during the second half of the eighteenth century, regarded as being engaged in a liberal profession. They were at that time put through a rigid course of study.

Professors were much less numerous and enjoyed considerably less prestige than they do in our day. Moreover, the professors of law and medicine were first of all advocates and physicians. The faculties

of letters and arts corresponded to our present secondary school teachers. An exception was to be found in the Collège de France. The colleges were almost entirely in the hands of the churchmen, particularly up to the time of the expulsion of the Jesuits (1762). In most of the cities, too, teachers of Latin or mathematics were rarely found, and they were generally very poor. The school teachers of both sexes were often very numerous, but lived in extremely humble circumstances and could not be regarded as belonging to the bourgeoisie at all. The same may be said of teachers of music, dancing and fencing.

BOURGEOISIE LIVING AS NOBLEMEN

In the cities, and particularly in the important cities, we find many members of the bourgeoisie who lived from their income, or, as the expression went, "lived as noblemen." The conditions of this class varied considerably. Some were very rich, while others had only very meagre resources. They did not by any means all have the same origin. Some were merchants who had become rich and had retired. This was the course of development in the case of many members of the bourgeoisie. Others had been in the legal profession. Others again owned real estate. There were also many older unmarried women and widows. Besnard in his "Souvenirs" declares that people retired of their

own free will when they had accumulated an estate insuring them an income of between 3000 and 4000 livres.

This class of retired bourgeois who "lived as noblemen" constitutes one of the characteristics of French society in the eighteenth century. The wealthy families had a tendency to retire and shunned work. Thus, in a city such as Saint-Malo we find many bourgeois "living like noblemen." They belonged to merchant families. In England this tendency hardly existed. The sons of rich English citizens and of gentlemen did not hesitate to work and to engage in business. This contrast is interesting, especially when we note that it existed at a time when primogeniture was in vogue in France as well as in England.

THE NEW NOBILITY AND THE URBAN PATRICIATE

In all the cities we find a sort of urban patriciate. It included a certain number of families that had hereditary possession of municipal positions. Their members frequently belonged to the new nobility, for these positions brought with them the rank of nobility. To these were added those persons who secured nobility by virtue of juridical positions. Almost everywhere, too, we note a rivalry between the families that formed the high bourgeoisie, and the middle and low bourgeoisie (advocates, physicians, merchants, artisans, etc.).

At the time of the convocation of the States General most of the cities witnessed serious struggles between these two elements of the bourgeoisie, and we notice that the third estate wished to exclude from the right of representing it in the assembly those who were designated as *anoblis*.

We should consider also that the more comfortably situated bourgeois often had more or less considerable landed property in the rural sections, with farms and country homes. This was frequent near the cities, and often the bourgeois owners added to their names the name of one of their estates. They were "sieurs de." But this designation was by no means equivalent to the title of nobility.

THE MODE OF LIFE

But the high bourgeoisie constituted only a small minority. The bourgeoisie as a whole led a very simple life, as can be seen by the inventories made after death, and by some memoirs.

The "Souvenirs d'un nonagénaire," written by an Angevin, François Yves Besnard, show us in great detail the mode of life of lawyers and seignorial agents in the small cities. Besnard has described for us the house of his great-grandmother, the widow of a notary. In the ground floor was a large room which served at the same time as a kitchen; a dining room and a sleeping room, with two beds. Beside this there was a smaller room

without a fireplace, which contained a single bed, two closets and a few chairs. For receptions there was a large hall with a wardrobe and some armchairs. This room too contained a bed. In the second floor there was a room with two beds, and an attic.

Even in the large cities, such as Angers, most of the houses of the bourgeoisie had neither hangings nor rich furnishings. The huge fireplaces had no ornaments of any kind, no vases, porcelain or clocks. The silver rarely consisted of more than a dozen covers and a few goblets. There were plates and dishes of terra cotta or of coarse crockery. There was only one servant. To be sure, almost everyone had rich stores of linen, often coarse but usually substantial. The cloth was manufactured by rural artisans.

"All bourgeois families eat in their kitchens," we are informed. There were four meals a day. Breakfast was eaten between seven and eight. The dinner, at eleven or at noon, consisted of a soup or boiled beef. At four o'clock there was a lunch, and in the evening a supper with a roast and a salad. Of course, when guests were invited, the meal was more elaborate. There were meat-pies, roasts, salads, and some vegetables.

There was also little luxury in clothing. The wardrobe comprised garments for summer and winter. Wedding and gala garments passed, as they still do among the peasants of Lower Brit-

tany, from generation to generation. "Top-knots or ribbons of gay colors" and flounces, we are informed by the "Souvenirs d'un nonagénaire," were worn only by women of the nobility or of the high bourgeoisie. They were never seen on wives of notaries, surgeons or shopkeepers.

Moreover, the dowry given to a daughter rarely exceeded 6000 livres. "A dowry of 10,000 or 15,000 francs presupposed vast estates or great commercial prosperity," even in cities such as Angers. It was only among the high bourgeoisie (wholesale merchants, financiers, and wealthy lawyers) that the mode of life changed during the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus, in cities like Rennes or Laval, new residences were built, or the old ones were furnished more comfortably. It became customary to have salons and dining rooms, and more than one room was heated. But even in Paris, we are told by Besnard, the middle and low bourgeoisie lived very simply. Luxury was restricted to the nobility, the financiers and the great merchants.

INTELLECTUAL CULTURE

The bourgeoisie, particularly the lawyers, were at times very cultured. This is indicated by the inventories of private libraries that have come down to us. The old stock of the municipal library of Rennes consists in great part of the library

of the advocates of Rennes. It contains the best works that appeared in the eighteenth century, and particularly most of the "philosophical" writings. The works on law, written by the advocates, were often outstanding and revealed a profound knowledge of all questions of administration; many of them too are distinguished by their lucid exposition.

Arthur Young, traveling in France shortly before the outbreak of the Revolution, was struck by the great intellect of some women belonging to the bourgeoisie. He was impressed in particular by a Madame Picardet of Dijon, whom he called "a treasure for Guyton de Morveau (the celebrated chemist), for she is able and eager to converse with him on subjects of chemistry, as well as on others, whether they be pleasing or instructive." Women like Madame Roland were not very rare in bourgeois society at the end of the eighteenth century.

REVOLUTIONARY SENTIMENTS OF THE BOURGEOISIE

The bourgeoisie, especially the high bourgeoisie, was a relatively privileged class, for it was in general exempt from the *taille,* and a great number of positions were open to it. But it was excluded from many offices, and, since the edict of 1781, particularly from the army. The bourgeoisie could not hold the great administrative offices, which it felt more capable of filling than the nobility. Hence the bourgeois were often wounded in their

pride and self-respect. All these grievances of the bourgeoisie were forcefully set forth by a nobleman, the Marquis de Bouillé, in his "Mémoires":

"Generally the bourgeois had received an education, which they needed more than the nobles; some of whom, by virtue of birth and wealth, secured high state offices without merit or efficiency, while others were destined to languish in subordinate army positions. Thus, at Paris and in the other large cities, the bourgeoisie was superior to the nobility in wealth, ability and personal merit. In the provincial cities it was similarly superior to the rural nobility. The bourgeois were conscious of this superiority, but they were everywhere humiliated, and they were excluded by military regulations from positions in the army. They were also excluded in a sense from the high clergy, because the bishops were chosen from among the high nobility, and the curates generally also. . . . High positions on the bench were also closed to them, and most of the sovereign courts admitted only nobles. Finally it was necessary to prove nobility even in order to be admitted to the position of *maître des requêtes*."

It is clear then that in 1789, as is proved by the memorials of the States General, it was the entire third estate that rose to demand the abolition of the privileges enjoyed by the aristocracy, the admission of all men to all positions, and, in the rural sections, the destruction of the manorial system. The latter demand was added to the program of the bourgeoisie at the insistence of the peasants, or at least in order to win them over to the cause of the urban third estate. No doubt neither the bourgeoisie nor the rural population formed a clearly delimited class. They were di-

vided into many distinct categories, often with opposing interests. Moreover, while the first and second estates tried to safeguard a community of interests, without feeling any real solidarity, the non-privileged classes, on the other hand, realized that they all had the same demands against the privileged classes, and the same abuses to combat. That is the reason why the lower classes, forming a bloc against the upper classes, came to feel that they truly represented the nation.

It has been contended not without reason that many of the nobility were descended from the third estate, that there was a slow accession from the popular classes to the nobility, and that the high bourgeoisie bordered directly upon the nobility. But this was of little avail to the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, especially since the various social classes developed more and more into closed castes. Then too, only a slight minority of the third estate rose to the nobility. The observations of Mireur are especially interesting for anyone who is studying the sources of the nobility, but they do not prove that the third estate had no good reasons for assailing the privileges of the nobility.

The most active elements of the third estate were those engaged in the practise of law, for they were impelled not only by their class interests, but also by the new ideas that excited their enthusiasm. No doubt the class of merchants and the leaders in industry and business, who were en-

terprising innovators and hostile to regulations and juridical privileges that opposed their own privileges, helped to undermine the *ancien régime*. But in 1788–1789 the men engaged in the practise of law played the leading rôle, conducted the campaign of the third estate and drew up the majority of the memorials.

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Chapter XII

Poverty and Its Relief

The historians who have dealt with French society of the eighteenth century have often described with complacency all the brilliant trappings of that refined civilization, by virtue of which the privileged classes enjoyed "the amenities of life." But there was another aspect of the matter, which as a rule writers purposely overlook. It is the poverty which oppressed a great part of the population in the rural sections, as well as in the cities. No correct idea of the social and economic life of a period can be gained if this essential element of the question is overlooked.

POVERTY IN THE RURAL SECTIONS

Contrary to conditions as they exist today, the greatest poverty in the eighteenth century was found in the rural sections. In order to understand this, we must recall what has already been said above concerning peasant property and agriculture.

Everywhere we find peasants in comfortable circumstances, but they constituted only a slight

minority of the rural population. Most of the peasants did not have enough land for their own needs and possessed almost no property at all. This fact, which is clear enough in Brittany, appeared more striking still in the provinces of the north, especially in Artois, Picardy and Flanders. These day-laborers had no means of support except the strength of their arms. Their wages were generally very low; in Brittany they received only eight or ten sous per day, and even in the richest provinces the wages were always less than 20 sous, and frequently less than 15. Increases in wages at the end of the eighteenth century were more than counterbalanced by increase in the cost of living.

In normal times the agricultural laborers could barely afford to satisfy their fundamental needs. But if one of those crises came that were so frequent in the eighteenth century, for example a series of bad crops, the laborers were doomed to unemployment at the very time when prices rose considerably. This meant poverty for thousands of families, and the obligation of asking for alms. The prosperous peasants, far from helping them, were concerned only with "increasing the price of their grain," as a priest of Brittany remarked in 1775.

POVERTY IN THE CITIES

In the cities, too, the existence of many poor was frequently noted. In a city like Rennes a

sixth of the population was too indigent to be subject to the capitation, and among those who were subject to it there were many laborers and petty merchants whose condition was quite precarious. Moreover, the journeymen of the trades themselves received low wages, hardly more than 12 or 15 sous per day. An industrial crisis or an increase of food prices sufficed to reduce them to misery. At Vitré, from 1760 on, the economic depression that affected the cloth industry reduced three fourths of the inhabitants to dire distress. They died of starvation in their hovels, as is shown by a letter of a subdelegate (*agent de l'intendant*) written in 1762. In the great industrial centers, in eastern Normandy, Picardy, Flanders and Champagne, the industrial crisis wrought by the commercial treaty with England of 1786, caused extreme poverty among the workmen. Many poor, who could no longer subsist in the country, fled to the cities, where they hoped to find work or at least more generous alms than in the country.

Nevertheless it is manifest that during the eighteenth century poverty was more widespread and more intense in the country than in the city. In the country, too, as Dr. Bagot of Saint Brieuc observes, epidemics were more frequent and more fatal.

More than any other class, it was the poor of the rural sections that constituted the bands of beggars and vagabonds who overran the roads, pil-

laged the villages, robbed the travelers and terrorized the inhabitants of the farms and isolated hamlets, which were so numerous in the west. This scourge became more serious at the end of the *ancien régime,* and all the memorials of 1789 agreed in demanding the adoption of measures calculated to relieve this situation.

IMPOTENCE OF CHARITY

Private charity was absolutely powerless in the face of poverty. The noble proprietors generally acquitted themselves of their philanthropic duties very unsatisfactorily, and the ecclesiastical tithe-owners, too, gave only very little money for the relief of the poor. This is declared not only in the parish memorials, but also by the subdelegates of the governors and the priests themselves.

In the Middle Ages there were very many hospitals and almonries in the rural sections. But most of them disappeared in the sixteenth century. Charitable foundations of rural parishes for the relief of the poor were also very scarce and poorly endowed.

In the cities, too, charity left much to be desired. Although M. Chaudron tells us that at Troyes it was perfectly organized, his reasoning does not seem convincing to us. Most of the cities, to be sure, had hospitals with landed property, a fixed income and more or less abundant voluntary

gifts, which did not, however, suffice for the provision of the patients, as is proved by the investigations made by the royal authorities during the eighteenth century. Such efficiency as they did have was due to the services of certain religious communities of women. The hospital of the city of Rennes contained only 120 beds for a population of 30,000, with no special provision for maternity cases. The hospitals of Paris were wretchedly organized. The patients were herded together in unhealthful rooms; several shared the same bed; food and medical attention were equally insufficient. The investigation made by Necker was particularly instrumental in revealing these conditions.

In many cities, it is true, kitchens for the poor were created. Their special purpose was to assist those paupers who were ashamed of their poverty, and they were in charge of sisters of mercy. We have here the first beginnings of our modern charitable boards. But this charity, as it was exercised for example by the parish societies and the great Poor Office at Paris, did not reach the most indigent. Its particular purpose was to help members of the bourgeoisie who had been stricken with poverty, that is, the paupers who were ashamed of their poverty, and this on condition that they fulfill their religious vows. As M. Léon Cahen has said very aptly: "The charity of the societies has its origin in the idea of religious devotion, not in a sentiment of revolt against human misery; their members

carry out a work not of social justice and appeasement, but one of personal edification."

AID GIVEN BY THE STATE

Prior to 1760 the state did very little in the way of giving aid. Of course it tried to combat mendicity, but chiefly for the sake of maintaining public order. To this end the government, under the reign of Louis XIV, ordered that beggars and vagabonds be confined in the general almshouses, where they were compelled to work. Such almshouses were installed in most of the cities, but their resources were insufficient for their needs and they could receive only a small part of all the many professional beggars. The general almshouses often had to take in also abandoned children, but they carried out this duty in a very unsatisfactory manner.

The beggars had to be permitted to beg for charity. The best that could be done was to try to regulate their profession, as is shown by a curious document of 1763 pertaining to the city of Rennes:

> "There have been distributed, to all the poor, tin boxes or containers with numbers and the coat-of-arms of the city; Each pauper has had designated to him a certain church portal or a quarter of the city where he may receive alms in his box, and he is forbidden to collect in churches, streets or in houses."

In the second half of the eighteenth century the government took up the question of relief. It es-

tablished beggars' quarters, where able-bodied vagabonds were confined. But these quarters seem to have fallen short of their purpose. Their resources were insufficient and their organization defective.

With Turgot and Necker new ideas arose. The administration, conscious of the duties which the state was expected to fulfill in this respect, tried to replace the measures of coercion with measures aiming at relief. In 1770, when Turgot was still governor of Limousin, he said: "The relief of men who suffer is the duty of all, and all the authorities will coöperate toward this end." And a little later Necker wrote in his "Administration des finances" (Administration of the Finances):

"It devolves upon the government to do everything that order and justice will permit for the numerous class of unfortunates. The government will determine the duties of society toward the unfortunates, in the distribution of taxes, in the establishment of public works, and in all provisions calculated to prevent misery and mendicity, which follows in its wake."

Similar ideas appeared in the provincial assemblies of 1787–1789.

Turgot was the first to make a serious effort to organize relief by means of furnishing work. He instituted the so-called *ateliers de charité*. Although the arrangement was useful, in that it helped in the building of roads, it did not succeed in doing away with begging and vagrancy, and

was only a partial remedy against poverty. In certain provinces, for example in Brittany, it proved impossible to carry out the plan on account of the dispute between the provinces and the royal administration, each of which tried to make the other responsible for its execution. The estates of the provinces hardly contributed anything to the work of relief. The central government was much more eager to carry it out, particularly during the last twenty years of the *ancien régime*. Another scheme which was tried at the end of the *ancien régime* was the creation of offices for alms or charity, but it seems that it brought no important results.

In a letter of the "intendant" of Brittany, of 1778, we read as follows:

> "In several provinces there have been established offices for alms and charity, which are engaged in the application of the alms obtained by them, either by securing work and furnishing masters and tools for those who are able to work, or by securing relief for the sick, or by making loans to those whose needs are only momentary."

But reliance was had only upon private charity, and in the country parishes this always proved powerless in helping the poor. In vain did the bishops coöperate with the royal authority, inviting the rectors to arouse the charitable spirit of their parishes. The offices for alms do not seem to have produced any great results, even in sections where they had been successfully installed.

The most important efforts made along these lines during the last twenty years of the *ancien régime* pertained to medical assistance. During epidemics medicine was distributed in the country, as well as in the cities, and special physicians for epidemics were appointed. Some of these physicians were deserving men, as for example the Saint Brieuc physician Bagot, the author of the interesting "Observations médecinales" (Medical Observations). Turgot did much to furnish medical aid, especially by creating in 1776 the Royal Medical Society, composed of enlightened physicians, who were relieved of routine duties. The society made investigations in all the provinces on the subject of public health, and encouraged the progress of therapeutics, inoculation, etc. Yet medical aid, especially in the rural sections, left much to be desired. Even in the cities the people refused obstinately to submit to inoculation. Epidemics of smallpox, typhoid and influenza were still very serious, more so in the rural sections than in the cities. An effort was made also to increase the number of trained midwives by offering suitable courses, as for example those offered by Madame Delaunay in 1775 and 1776. But in 1789 the parish memorials still complained of the incompetence of the midwives, who victimized women.

In reality private charity and also the charity incumbent upon ecclesiastical institutions proved powerless to combat poverty or even to lessen it

by diminishing the number of paupers. Nor had the state succeeded in suppressing mendicity and vagrancy. But new tendencies became manifest on the eve of the Revolution, when the reformers endeavored to organize relief by providing work. The necessity of profound reforms was apparent, and the state had to take the initiative. This was realized by the revolutionary assemblies, and above all by the Constituent Assembly, when it established its Committee on Mendicity. But it could do no more than map out an ambitious program. Time and financial resources were lacking for carrying out the plan. And the most essential prerequisite for a real battle against poverty was an improvement in economic and social conditions. The system of privileges which characterized the social condition of France in those days had the aggravation of poverty as its direct consequence. Although in the nineteenth century the progress of the great industries produced many evils and considerable suffering, especially in the cities, it is nevertheless true that by abolishing the manorial system and favoring property ownership on the part of the peasants, the French Revolution helped to improve the economic condition of the rural population. During the nineteenth century poverty was strikingly relieved in the rural sections. Mendicity and vagrancy, those curses that were denounced by the memorials of 1789, disappeared almost entirely.

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Chapter XIII

The Wishes of the Various Social Classes in 1789

For anyone wishing to study the divergence of economic interests among the various social classes, and for anyone interested in the social categories appearing in each of the three estates, it will be of value to study the memorials drawn up at the time of the convocation of the States General. There are the general memorials of the bailiwicks and seneschals' districts, those of the city and rural parishes, and those of the trade guilds.

AGREEMENT OF THE THREE CLASSES

It is true that the three classes agreed in protesting against the absolutism, or rather the despotism, of the royal administration, although showing the greatest respect for the principle of royalty and the person of the king. All the memorials objected to the *lettres de cachet*, arbitrary arrests, exceptional courts and the violation of the privacy of correspondence. The old zeal for the royal treasury was abandoned, and the guarantee of the public debt was demanded. The complete reform of criminal legislation was also demanded.

Among the foremost wishes of third estate, nobility and clergy alike were the granting of a constitution, the institution of States General that would meet regularly and have the power of approving taxation, the abolition of the governors or "intendants" of the provinces, and the guarantee of municipal and provincial liberties. But it should be noted that when the nobles and the members of the parliaments attacked absolutism, they were thinking particularly of enlightened despotism and of reforms making for equality and proposed by the liberal ministers at the end of the *ancien régime*.

DISAGREEMENT AMONG THE CLASSES

But on other questions the three classes did not agree. The clergy, for instance, was hostile to the freedom of the press, denounced licence in literature, opposed religious tolerance and even the granting of civil rights to the Protestants. Hence the clergy was opposed not only to the third estate, but also to the nobility, which in the eighteenth century had in part been won over by philosophical liberalism and had among its members many enthusiastic readers of Voltaire.

The third estate, for its part, attacked the privileges of the other two classes. Unanimously it demanded full equality of rights, the admission of all men to all offices, equal right of suffrage in electing delegates to the States, the abolition of the

manorial system, or at least the redemption of the manorial dues. This latter demand was imposed upon the bourgeoisie by the peasants. All the categories of the third estate, feeling that they had the same demands to make and the same abuses to combat, formed a coalition, as it were, against the privileged classes, and hence the third estate was the true representative of the nation.

DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES

On the other hand, when the privileged classes defended themselves against the claims of the third estate, they always tried to safeguard a group of special privileges and never enjoyed real solidarity. Everywhere we witness conflicts arising between the court nobility, which benefited by all the favors of the state, and the petty nobility, which was excluded from the high ranks of the army. The nobility of Périgord, for example, declared in its memorial:

"Our deputies will maintain, with all the dignity of their origin, the essential equality of the nobility, which can not be divided into several classes. We feel honored in considering the princes of the blood as the foremost members of our class. We concede to the parliament the functions of peerage. But we shall never concede it preëminence, nor shall we grant its claims. Hence our representatives will conscientiously oppose every act of precedence which, in the chamber of our order, might compromise the dignity and equality of the French nobility."

The majority of the nobility demanded the abolition of the venality of the military ranks and the disbanding of the privileged units in the army.

In the clergy the vicars often turned against the bishops and religious orders. They not only demanded an improvement of their own condition, but also desired a better distribution of the ecclesiastical property, which would thus be devoted to the needs of religion and the relief of the poor. They approached the idea of a nationalization of this property. Besides, they wished that the tithes be used for their "original purpose," instead of benefiting only the great tithe-owners. Finally they often called for the revival of ecclesiastical elections and of the old church councils.

THE VARIOUS CLASSES OF THE THIRD ESTATE

Let us consider now the third estate. The disagreements between peasants and bourgeois hardly appear in the memorials, especially in the general memorials of the bailiwicks and seneschals' districts, for the members of the bourgeoisie who drew them up were shrewd enough to adopt the grievances of the rural population against the privileged proprietors. But sometimes in the parish assemblies it happened that the peasants, refusing to accept the memorial presented by the local bourgeoisie, held a great indignation meeting and drew up a separate memorial. This occurred repeatedly in the

district of Rennes. In the bailiwicks and seneschals' districts the bourgeoisie arranged things in such a way as to have deputies of its own class elected, although the deputies of the rural classes were more numerous.

Between the various classes of peasants differences were continually appearing. The prosperous peasants, the so-called *laboureurs,* on the one hand, and the mass of poor peasants, on the other, quarreled especially over the question of the commons. In Normandy, Île de France and Flanders the poor peasants often protested against the "coalition of farms," that is the formation of large farms out of a number of small ones, a thing which was very injurious to them.

ECONOMIC DEMANDS

In industrial matters, as we know, there were conflicts of interests between the class of merchants and factory directors, and the class of masters of the trades. In the memorials of the bailiwicks and seneschals' districts the influence of the former predominated, in spite of the small number of its members. This class succeeded in having articles inserted against the industrial regulations and the system of trades guilds. But in the memorials of the guilds that have been preserved to us, the assembled masters demanded the maintenance of the old system of guilds, and of the privileges, often

protested against the use of machinery and against the extension of rural industry, which was so harmful to their interests, and claimed that in making this protest they had in mind the common interest of all the people. As for the journeymen, they rarely succeeded in making themselves heard, for they did not take part in the assemblies of the guilds. But sometimes they drew up special memorials, as for instance those that have been preserved for Marseilles and Troyes. Although they are in agreement with their masters in protesting against machinery, they oppose them on questions pertaining to work and wages. They demand the right of forming associations and of having special brotherhoods.

In commercial matters, it was the wishes of the commercial bourgeoisie that prevailed most frequently. Thus the memorials demanded the abolition of the internal customs, the tolls and town-dues, which were so injurious to their business. It was this class too that demanded free exportation of manufactured products and agricultural commodities. The great merchants proved to be well disposed toward economic freedom in all its forms. But often they complained that their cause was but inadequately represented in the elections to the States General. Against the treaty of commerce of 1786 with England there was universal protest. However, due to the progress of capitalism—at least in its commercial form—conflicts began to

arise between business men, speculators and the mass of consumers. These conflicts became more serious at the time of the Revolution, and often the political struggle was merely one of their manifestations.

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Conclusion

If we consider economic life and social conditions in France during the eighteenth century, we realize clearly that the situation had not changed appreciably since the previous century.

Landed property still played a preponderant rôle, and its distinguishing characteristics had hardly been modified. The manorial system had weakened, but it survived up to the Revolution. Peasant ownership was preserved and even intrenched. It was the peasants who, as tenants or farmers, alone tilled the soil and by their labor fed the privileged classes. Thus it was the peasant question that made itself felt in 1789, and it was the peasants who forced the solution of the question upon the revolutionary assemblies.

So far as industrial labor is concerned, it was still the old system of industry on a small scale that was in force. The guilds were in a state of deterioration long before the reform of Turgot had threatened their existence. But they preserved their nature as closed bodies with conservative tendencies, and it became increasingly difficult to get into them, unless one was the son of a master. A breach had been made in the industrial regulations, and although they had not disappeared, there

was a tendency at the end of the *ancien régime* to allow them to fall into desuetude.

It seems also that greater juridical barriers arose between the social classes. Thus the nobility, although continuing to recruit its membership, in a measure, from the newly rich, tended to become a closed caste in certain respects. The reforms instituted among this class during the reign of Louis XIV, although consisting especially of fiscal measures, excluded from the nobility families of recent extraction, especially families continuing to engage in commerce, inferior judges, and finally nobles who were too poor to assert their rights. Accordingly seats in the parliaments were not accessible to commoners, and the gap between nobles and commoners became increasingly great. The nobility had hardly any resource or any occupation outside of positions in the army.

But at this very period profound economic transformations were developing which were destined to change completely the contour of the social classes. Capitalism, in its commercial form at least, developed remarkably in the eighteenth century and began to exercise an influence upon industry. The class of merchants and factory directors became ever more important. In many cases they succeeded in getting "control" of rural industry, thus opening the way to great capitalist industry. In the urban trades of the textile industry, notably in the silk industry at Lyons, the master-merchants

brought the master-workmen under their domination, making mere wage-earners of them. Thus this essentially capitalist class of merchants became stronger and stronger, and got into direct conflict with the trades of artisans and with the guild organizations, the restrictions of which it succeeded in escaping. This class was to be the parent of the great industrial magnates of the nineteenth century, and it showed signs of being quite enterprising, progressive and revolutionary, at least in the economic sense, and hostile to regulations, as well as to legal obstructions and privileges. This first impetus of capitalism contributed greatly to the social transformation that was to be effected by the Revolution.

The Revolution served to destroy all the juridical distinctions existing among the social classes, and to establish legal equality.

During the nineteenth century the conception of social classes and the consciousness of their existence on the part of individuals became ever more marked. The abolition of the legal privileges of certain classes and the progress of capitalism brought about a new alignment of the social classes, based upon the economic rôle played by each. The class of influential merchants and great captains of industry acquired higher importance. The gap between employers and employees became more marked. While in the eighteenth century the journeymen had no clear idea of their solidarity—

this explains the lack at the time of a labor problem as it exists today—the laboring class of the nineteenth century became genuinely conscious of its collective interests. We should note that this new conception of the social classes went hand in hand with the new individualistic organization of society.

In this lies the profound difference between the social and economic life of the nineteenth century and that which we have endeavored to describe as being characteristic of the eighteenth. In a period of fifty years a more far-reaching transformation took place than had marked the entire three centuries since the end of the Middle Ages.

But for the student of economic realities as they have developed from the eighteenth century on, there can be no doubt that the social classes were already then much more diversified than the official documents or legal texts would lead one to believe. We have seen, for example, that the peasant classes did not form a single, united group, that proprietors and non-proprietors frequently had conflicting interests, and that among the farmers there was a great variety of conditions. In law, all nobles seemed to enjoy the same privileges, but in reality the court nobility and the provincial nobility were quite distinct from one another, both as regards condition and mode of life. Among the clergy, too, there was a radical difference between the secular dignitaries and the parish priests, between the

secular clergy and the regular clergy. And what a difference there was between the masters of the trades, the managers of manufacturing establishments, and the merchants, although they all went under the collective name of the third estate of the cities! The financier bordered upon the world of the nobility and frequently even overshadowed it with his luxury. The municipal judges, admitted to the nobility by virtue of their position, together with the rich retired class, formed a high bourgeoisie, much farther removed from the popular classes than from the privileged classes. The urban patriciate, in 1789, entered into a violent conflict with the "commoners," the middle and low bourgeoisie, the lawyers, physicians, merchants and artisans, who formed the backbone of the democratic republic of the Year I and the Year II.

Finally, the predominance of rural property ownership and of agricultural production constitutes a permanent characteristic of French civilization, which survived even in the nineteenth century, in spite of the progress of industry. Consequently the equilibrium was never destroyed, as it was in England and has been in Germany today, to the advantage of industrial production and to the prejudice of the rural sections. There was only a moderate exodus to the cities. France remained essentially an agricultural country, and even today it is not losing its character as an agricultural democracy. To a certain extent at least

we may still apply to France today the words written by Chaptal in 1817: "Of all the nations of Europe, France is still the one that would suffer the least privation if it were reduced to its own resources."

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